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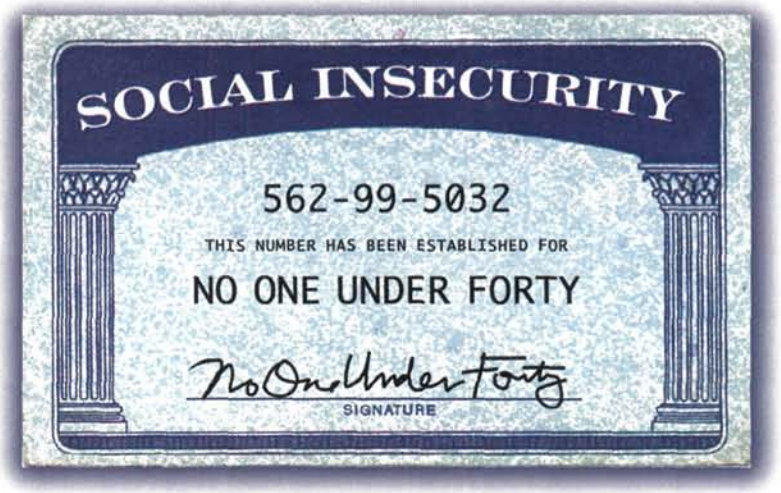

Social Security Is On The Skids. Does Anyone Over Forty Give A Damn?

by Matthew Miller

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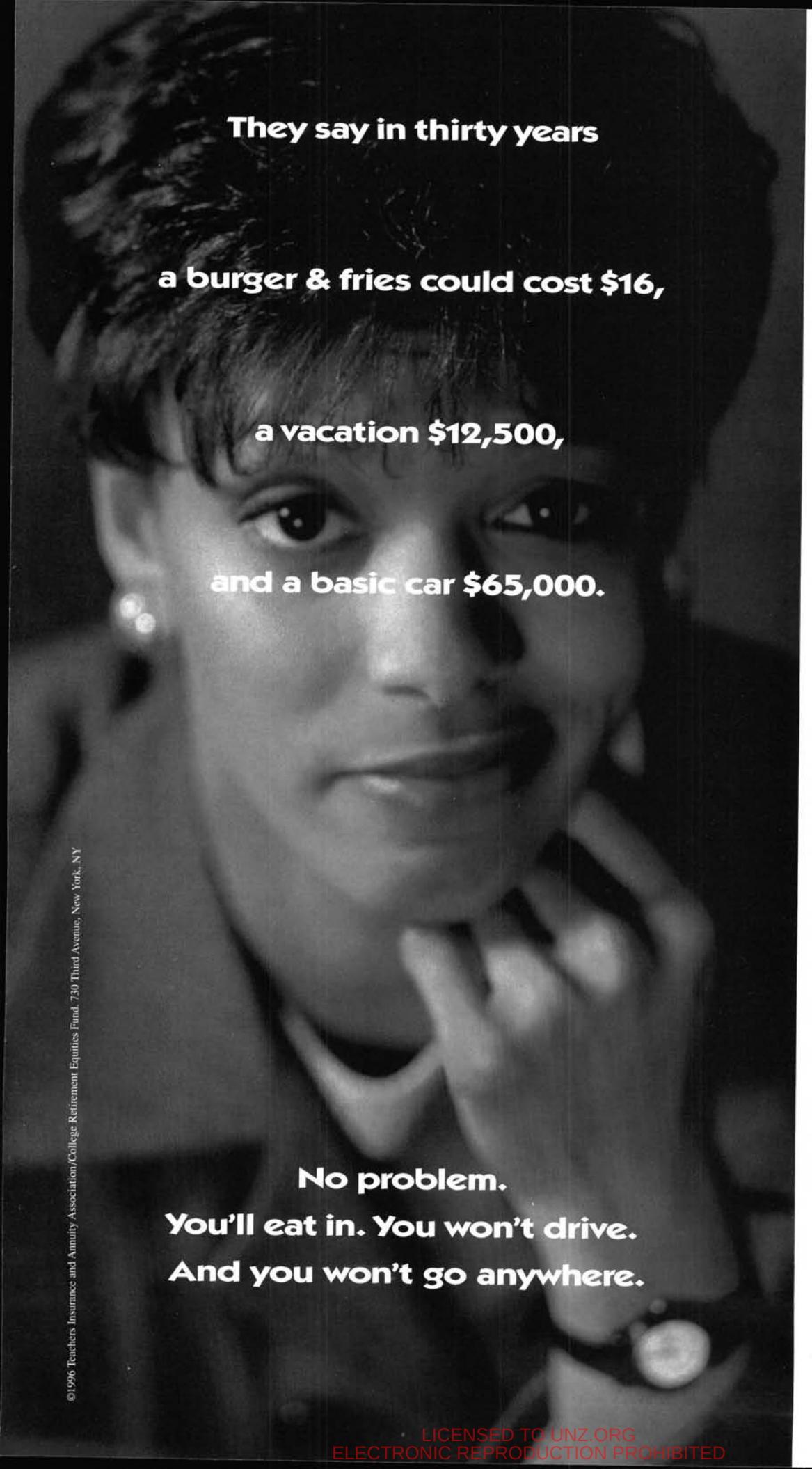
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

APRIL 15, 1996

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,239

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 214, Number 16, Issue 4,239, April 15, 1996. (Printed in the U.S. on March 27, 1996.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 8 & 15, July 15 & 22, Aug. 19 & 26, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1996) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1995 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Last of the Jordanians

To the editors:

Edward Norden's "alternative history of the Middle East" ("The Jordan Imperative," March 18) may well be largely factual for all I know, but his peppering of attempted analogies to the colonization of New England are neither factual nor defensible. Indeed, they are Hollywood.

Norden asserts that "even if (Zionists) had started coming back to the Middle East in 1620, they probably could not have imitated the white settlers of Massachusetts because the natives here were not the Pequot." Neither were those encountered at Plymouth in 1620 Pequot, but Wampanoag. If they had instead been the decidedly less-than-acquiescent Pequot of Connecticut, the story of Plymouth would likely mirror that of Roanoke, and Norden's premise would evaporate.

An even more gratuitous display comes when he characterizes Chaim Weizmann's perception of a possible confluence of interests with the Emir Faisal in 1918-19. "Here was something potentially grander than the alliance between the European settlers and the Mohicans (sic) against the Pequot." Aside from the mixture of apples and oranges in Norden's jump from embryonic Plymouth Colony to the expansionism of Massachusetts Bay Colony that culminated in the defeat/genocide of the Pequot in 1637, one questions who these "Mohicans" were. He obviously means the Mohegan, the band of Pequot peoples led by the crafty and pragmatic Uncas, but in referring to the Mohican of the upper Hudson valley he demonstrates an indebtedness not to history but to James Fenimore Cooper. These erroneous and smug little references to the English/Indian interface seem an attempt to capitalize on modern portrayals that pass as truth but are often as inaccurate as those of past generations, and equally self-serving.

JON B. CHASE
Oakdale, Connecticut

Lashback

To the editors:

I had to go back and reread Camille Paglia's deconstruction of Hillary Clinton (March 4) after I saw the outpouring of anti-Paglia letters in the April Fool's Day edition of TNR. Wow. If this is any reasonable sampling of the kind of mail you got in response, it is evidence of either (a) a large and well-disciplined phone chain of Hillaryites or (b) a serious lack of subtlety and humor on the part of some of your readership.

What I particularly enjoy about these letters is their insinuation that Paglia must be mentally deranged. Women have been accused of insanity for generations for saying things that the bourgeoisie found distasteful. In the 1960s, hints of madness became chic—Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath. They were approvingly enveloped with madness. Now that the professionalist-bureaucratic wing of feminism to which Hillary belongs, as Paglia correctly notes, has won, refuseniks like Paglia are easily cast off as crazies or class enemies. When Paglia talks about "despotic instincts," she is certainly giving utterance to my experience of professional feminism.

Thanks for giving Camille Paglia a venue. I don't always agree with her, but I am grateful for her perversity and her eloquence. She forces me to look behind my middle-class, Christian, heterosexual assumptions and check out a worldview to which I would not otherwise be exposed. It is Camille Paglia, not Hillary Clinton, who "embodies the aspirations of [my] gender."

BONNIE L.A. SHULLENBERGER
Ossining, New York

To the editors:

Thank God TNR has better writers than readers. The letters you printed from persons reacting to Camille Paglia's article on Hillary Clinton were disappointing, to say the least. Paglia's article was witty, insightful and wise. The letters criticizing her were petulant, juvenile, self-righteous and *dead.* After I finished with them, I imagined that I had just read through The Official Bulletin of the Enemies of Truth Club.

DAVID PALMIERI
Chelsea, Massachusetts

What you believe

To the editors:

As a Lutheran reader of your magazine, I must point out that in "What You Do" (March 18) Andrew Sullivan—in his effort to point out Pat Buchanan's hypocrisy—forgets (or ignores) the fact that many Christians like myself who do not wish to extend theological sanction to homosexuality base their stance on Scripture, not Church tradition (specifically St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 1). Not all Christians who question homosexuality are Buchananesque Roman Catholics (nor, for that matter, devotees of "The 700 Club").

TIM FURNISH
Columbus, Ohio

To the editors:

Another curious thing about the Buchanans' childlessness: Regardless of the reason for it, why is it that a man who promises to be "the most pro-life president" in the nation's history, a man who admits to being worth at least $3.5 million, has not adopted any children?

PERRY TURNER
Silver Spring, Maryland

Campbell soup

To the editors:

Prior to Michael Lind's recent article on him, I had never heard of Carroll Campbell ("Campbell Soup," March 18). For all I know he may very well be the anti-Semitic sleazeball you suggest he is. Nevertheless I found the article troubling. The tone of the article is evasive. The author clearly leads the reader to the conclusion that Campbell is an anti-Semite or a panderer to anti-Semites but never comes out and says it. I think that is a cowardly polemical strategy aimed at preserving the author's ability to deny that he may have defamed Campbell, while at the same time accomplishing the clear goal of tarring Campbell with anti-Semitism and by association doing the same thing to Bob Dole. This is particularly sleazy given that the sole bases for Lind's insinuations appear to be incidents that occurred seventeen to eighteen years ago. I also have the impression that, although willing to throw mud, the author did not interview anyone. Even if your author is right, he's wrong.

JOHN A. KELLEHER
Summit, New Jersey

To the editors:

I am outraged that THE NEW REPUBLIC would undertake a smear campaign against Governor Carroll Campbell concerning allegations which were laid to rest to my satisfaction many years ago.

When these allegations were first made public during the 1986 gubernatorial campaign, the Jewish community in South Carolina obviously had concerns and questions, all of which repeatedly have been addressed forthrightly by the governor in public and in private.

Carroll Campbell provided distinguished service to all the people of South Carolina for eight years. During that time we in the Jewish community got to know the governor, worked with him, and many of us became ardent admirers. He formed the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust. More than any other governor, he worked with us to make sure that South Carolinians did not forget the Holocaust. Indeed, he helped us take this tragic story into the schools of South Carolina so that our

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children might remember and learn.

The governor established the first South Carolina-Israeli exchange program to improve the cultural and economic relationships between our state and Israel. Moreover, Governor Campbell became the first governor in our state to lead a trade commission to Israel. He was a leading pro-Israel governor in the National Governors' Association, has received commendations from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and Carroll Campbell worked tirelessly behind the scenes to expedite the immigration of Russian Jews to Israel.

WILLIAM H. STERN
Columbia, South Carolina

Dept. of amplification

To the editors:

In my article ("Spy vs. Spy," April 8), I neglected to give credit to Steven Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists, who was of considerable help to me in my research, particularly in locating hard-to-find materials. Through their Project on Intelligence Reform, the FAS has made numerous intelligence-related archives available to the general public. In no way did I intend to slight the notable contribution of the FAS to the debate over the future of the intelligence community.

JOSEPH FINDER
Boston, Massachusetts

National funk

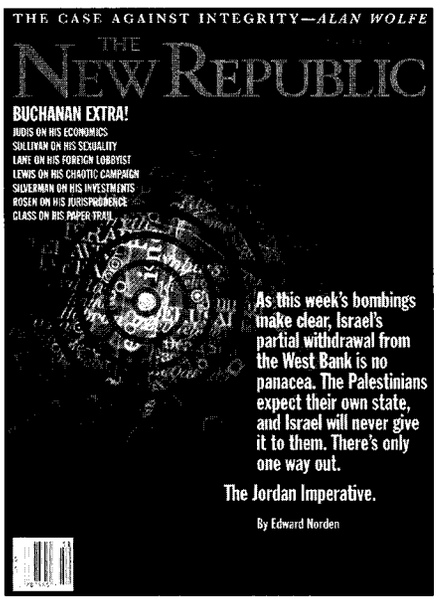
To the editors:

I am deeply amazed by Robert Brustein's startlingly inaccurate, silly yet reactionary review of *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk* ("More Noise Than Funk," March 4). The only explanation I can come up with is that while Brustein was physically sitting inside the Newman Theater at the Joseph Papp Public Theater watching the show, he was in actuality experiencing another one—conceived, written and staged exclusively inside Brustein's head.

Noise/Funk is about movements and migration, how, as we transform as a nation, so do our rhythms. There is nothing separatist in *Noise*'s thought process, as Brustein implies, other than it looks at America through the sifter of tap dancing. Hopefully all ballroom, break and belly dancers will not be offended by being excluded, but the true wonder of theater and art is that it needn't look like us to be about us—right Mr. Brustein?

I also love how he states that the dancers dance as if "stomping on the faces of their oppressors." True enough, the dancers in *Noise* hit the stage hard, but then again so does history. And it is that relationship—the ability of a nation, a people, to take the beat of history on, to feel its sting, its bite, its uncompromising force and then to defy it, challenge it and become it before soaring past it—that is the essence of *Noise/Funk*. I guess that's what the audience was celebrating when Brustein reports them jumping to their feet roaring.

The characters in *Noise/Funk* do not parade their victimization. The only one doing so is Brustein, who chose to read hostility and racism against white society into every step, beat and idea of *Noise/Funk*. For example, when Brustein points out that a character dressed as Colin Powell comes on stage, dances with


THE CASE AGAINST INTEGRITY—ALAN WOLFE
THE NEW REPUBLIC
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LEWIS ON HIS CHAOTIC CAMPAIGN
SILVERMAN ON HIS INVESTMENTS
ROSEN ON HIS JURISPRUDENCE
GLASS ON HIS PAPER TRAIL
As this week's bombings make clear, Israel's partial withdrawal from the West Bank is no panacea. The Palestinians expect their own state, and Israel will never give it to them. There's only one way out.
The Jordan Imperative.
By Edward Norden

street kids and gives the audience the finger, it sounds like a fascinating number. Unfortunately, that's not the number in the show. "Taxi" is about four different types of black men—a banjee boy, a student, a Wall Street type and a famous general, all trying to get a taxi in New York City.

And the whole "Uncle Huck-a-Buck" sequence is not about denigrating Shirley Temple and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, who, according to Brustein, were the first interracial couple in Hollywood (please!). It is about how in order for black tap dancers to be embraced by the mass media they had to first be put through the sifter of racial/cultural stereotypes. And as much as I love the idea he presents that tap dancing was one of the few expressions of American culture that knew no racial divisions—historical fact tells quite another story. In everything from pay discrepancies to billing to quality of venues, double standards have been a part of the entertainment landscape dating back before the revolutionary war.

But the biggest discrepancy between the *Noise/Funk* on stage and the one in Brustein's head is that his show is dark, ominous and bleak when it is in fact an extraordinarily joyful show, full of bite and possessing a defiant edge but joyful nonetheless, a sentiment echoed by virtually every other critic who saw it.

At the end of the sequence that includes the "Uncle Huck-a-Buck" satirization the lights reveal Savion Glover dancing before three mirrors. He speaks of four tap dancers, Lon Chaney, Chuck Greene, Jimmy Slyde and Buster Brown, and how they never experienced tremendous financial gain or widespread media popularity, but stayed dedicated to dance all of their lives, how they guided him and passed on to him their dance. Watching Savion embrace their art, their rhythms, claiming them as his own, is what *Noise/Funk* is really all about—embracing the rhythms of one's history, no matter how complicated or painful, and then using those rhythms to take flight.

I feel sad that Mr. Brustein didn't see the show everyone else in the theater saw that night. Had he not been so busy projecting his own victimization onto the piece, he might have found the show to be an affirmation of the human spirit; a celebration of the power of art to transcend.

GEORGE C. WOLFE
Producer, Public Theater
New York, New York

To the editors:

As a white tap dancer who has grown more and more frustrated by the plague of Afrocentrism, I want to thank Robert Brustein for his intelligent piece on *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk*. The tide of misplaced black nationalism has grown so great that by modern standards we have to think of Honi Coles as a white man to accept his huge contribution.

The separation of tap into "black" and "white" elements is just wrong. Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, one of the first legends of tap, danced in a style that is unmistakably European. Are we to assume that Bojangles sprung up from the plains of Africa with a vision of a whole new form, put that big smile on his face and just began to shuffle?

It is lonely and cold as a white dancer in the '90s, just as it was lonely and cold for a black dancer in the '30s. I look forward to 2050, when a dance is just a dance and no one is pursuing litigation over property rights.

JOSHUA HILBERMAN
Boston, Massachusetts

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FROM WASHINGTON

Oracle at Delphi

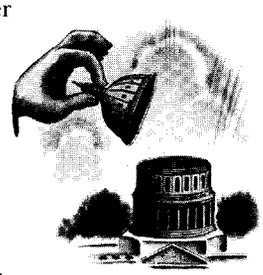
Last week's strike at two Delphi auto-part factories in Dayton, Ohio, was ostensibly not about wages but about outsourcing—General Motors' buying parts from the Robert Bosch company in Charleston, South Carolina, rather than from Delphi, which it owns. And its resolution was widely interpreted as a draw between management and labor. But the truth about the strike is grimmer than this might suggest. It proved that the single greatest factor pushing down American workers' wages is not technology, as most economists insist, but the inability of workers, divided by region and sometimes nation, to resist employer pressure to reduce costs by cutting wages and benefits. In that long-term war, the workers are not simply losing, they're being decimated.

Since the early '80s, outsourcing has become the craze among American firms. Sometimes companies outsource their work because they believe a smaller, focused firm can do it more efficiently. (In the early '80s, IBM hired tiny Microsoft to write an operating system for its personal computers.) But most often companies simply outsource to companies that pay their employees less. Unionized firms outsource from non-union suppliers with lower costs.

Outsourcing has reversed the positive trend in American wages. The growth of unions from the late '30s through the late '60s pushed the wage structure upward. Firms that wanted to avoid unionization were still forced to pay comparable wages and benefits to head off organizing drives. Outsourcing moves the wage structure downward. The non-union suppliers compete with each other to drive down costs, exerting pressure on the unionized workers to accept wage and benefit reductions. Once an industry becomes predominantly non-union (auto parts, once 65 percent union, is now only 20 percent unionized), the downward pressures become brutal. In Ypsilanti, Michigan, for instance, the British investment firm JLL is threatening to shut down a unionized parts plant it purchased if its workers don't accept a 64 percent cut in wages.

The Big Three American auto companies used to make almost all their own parts, but Ford and Chrysler failed to reopen many of the parts factories they closed during the recession of the early '80s. By 1986, Chrysler was buying 85 percent of its parts from lower-wage, non-unionized suppliers, while Ford bought 50 percent. That gave both companies a significant cost advantage over General Motors, which continued to make 65 percent of its own parts, and it set GM on a furious dash to increase its outsourcing.

Some of the new parts suppliers are foreign-owned companies that began migrating to the U.S. in the '70s to avoid exchange-rate instability but were later drawn by lower costs of production. By 1990, for instance, German factory workers were being paid, on the average, 50 percent more than American workers. European and Japanese companies set up most of their facilities in the upper Southeast, from southern Ohio down through Kentucky and Tennessee and across to the Carolinas. Most of these states had strong right-to-work laws that discouraged unionization. As Douglas Woodward, a business professor at the University of South Carolina, puts it, "You hear a lot from German companies about South Carolina being right-to-work."



Robert Bosch arrived in South Carolina in 1975 but significantly expanded its facilities in the mid-'80s. The company is unionized in Germany and pays an average of $41 an hour in wages and benefits. According to *Automotive News*, Bosch pays its non-union workers in Charleston $13.15 an hour in wages, plus $3.68 in benefits. Workers are liable for $2,000 in medical expenses annually. By contrast, GM workers make $18.58 an hour in wages and enjoy benefits worth another $16 an hour. These include comprehensive health care and a full pension after thirty years. That's almost twice the labor cost. Even in the capital-intensive brake industry, that gives Bosch an overwhelming advantage and creates enormous pressure on GM and other car companies to outsource. The unions can resist, as they did in Dayton, but, if they don't eventually accede to wage cuts or outsourcing, they'll imperil the car companies themselves and lose even more jobs.

Can anything be done? The usual remedies—worker retraining, corporate good citizenship—either won't work or are irrelevant, and what could work is unlikely to occur soon. First, the UAW could organize the non-union plants. That would reduce the downward pressure on wages, but it would be difficult to do. While Bosch workers make much less than Delphi workers in Dayton, they make more than most factory workers in South Carolina, where the average wage is $10.22 an hour. Firms like Bosch would shut down before they would accept wages and benefits commensurate to those at Delphi. To succeed, the UAW would have to seek more modest wage and benefit increases, but, since unions generally agree to a set contract across companies, this would jeopardize its higher-wage arrangements with firms like Delphi.

Second, the labor movement could seek government help. The unions and the Big Three have backed national health insurance because it would remove one of the advantages non-unionized firms enjoy. But during the first two years of the Clinton administration, they learned that it is almost impossible to win public and congressional support for this kind of ambitious reform. Ditto for the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act, which allows states to pass right-to-work laws.

Even if unions could organize companies like Bosch, and, even if the government defrayed the cost of benefits, the unions would still face pressures within the new global economy. According to last November's *Journal of Business Strategy*, "To survive, U.S. industry must continue to outsource work to more proficient, lower-cost locations. 'Delocalization' strategies are essential as the pool of skilled labor deepens around the world." Like other American companies, auto firms now purchase from suppliers in Latin America and in newly industrialized Asian countries, where wages are much lower (an average of $2.61 an hour in Mexico) and strikes non-existent. There are remedies for foreign outsourcing, too—domestic content legislation, social tariffs—but they are as likely to be adopted as national health insurance.

The lesson of the Delphi strike is an unhappy one for American workers. Resistance can hold off job loss temporarily, but, short of a transformation in public support for unions and for government, workers will find it nearly impossible to resist pressures to cut wages and benefits. That truth is beginning to sink in. It can only fuel the discontent that neither Clinton nor Dole seems capable of addressing.

JOHN B. JUDIS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 15, 1996

NOT-SO-MAD COWS

Since the Great Depression, U.S. agricultural policy has kept farmers working and citizens fed but at an astronomical cost to taxpayers and consumers. So the sweeping farm bill approved by a House-Senate conference committee last week, which knocks out a major pillar of the socialized American agriculture system, is good news, right? Well, sort of.

First, the good news. The bill incorporates a concept called "Freedom to Farm," as crafted by House Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts of Kansas, which attacks one particularly hard-to-defend chunk of farm subsidies. Known as deficiency payments, these are outlays of cash the federal government sends to farmers when commodity prices fall beneath a fixed rate. Aside from the billions it costs taxpayers each year, this program raises food prices, denies farmers planting choice and enriches loophole-savvy businesses with weak claims on the public trough. Freedom to Farm happily replaces this system with set payments scheduled to gradually decline over seven years (Stalin had five-year plans; Gingrich's always take two years longer), after which they will end. Nobody knows what will happen then. With any luck, nothing.

Of course, even this sensible provision has its naysayers. Rural Democrats like Toms Harkin and Daschle sneer that the set-payments approach amounts to "welfare for farmers," rewarding them whether or not they actually grow anything. Since the payments will no longer be tied to crop prices, they argue, the checks will be too stingy during famine and too generous during feast. That would be a cogent criticism—but only if set payments were a permanent rather than a temporary solution or if the Democrats had an alternative plan. Besides, what the critics are really objecting to isn't paying farmers for no reason over the next seven years—a practice the government has followed for decades, after all—but to the possibility that the government will pay them nothing afterward. The set payments are a golden parachute, a necessary bribe to wean farmers off the dole. What motivates rural Democrats is the fear that one day they'll no longer have this largess to deliver to their constituents who, in its absence, might desert the party. (Gleeful anticipation of this very scenario explains why so many Republicans support Freedom to Farm.)

The bill contains at least one other enlightened reform. Moderate Republicans teamed up with Democrats to restore funding for environmental programs that conservatives had targeted for elimination. Although we usually associate pollution with smokestacks, contamination from pesticide and fertilizer affects more than half the nation's waters. Provisions in the bill to take vulnerable land out of production should do as much good as the Clean Water Act to preserve wildlife and drinking water.

Now here's the bad part. While Congress agreed to retire the obnoxious direct payments, it left unscathed equally potent indirect subsidies: price-fixing and tariffs. The dairy system provides a good example. The government maintains prices in two basic ways: by regulating the price of milk and by purchasing large quantities of surplus butter, cheese and powdered milk. Following a long, arcane, internecine dairy spat among milk and cheese producers (see "Cheese Biz," TNR, December 25, 1995), Congress kept the price-fixing and dropped the surplus purchases. With other commodities, too, particularly peanuts and sugar, Congress favored indirect subsidies over direct ones. The obvious appeal of this strategy is that it costs the Treasury nothing. But indirect subsidies, while hidden, are also more regressive: they show up in higher costs to consumers. Since the poor devote a higher proportion of their income to groceries, and the rich a higher proportion to federal income taxes, subsidizing farmers through artificially high food prices is actually less equitable than writing them checks.

In the long term, the bill's real accomplishment has been to force Congress to think again about whether and why the government needs to dominate agricultural policy. The answer is: it shouldn't. New Dealers argued that farmers were starving. That's no longer true; the median farm family earns about $2,000 a year more than the typical non-farm family. Today liberals argue that we need to protect small farmers who are being swallowed up by agribusiness. But that's happening under the *current* system, which disproportionately favors the large, well-connected farming corporations. And, on those grounds, why not subsidize independent book stores? The truth is, all Americans should be entitled to certain things, like health care and education. Owning a farm isn't one of them. This bill is a small, welcome step toward that ultimate realization. •

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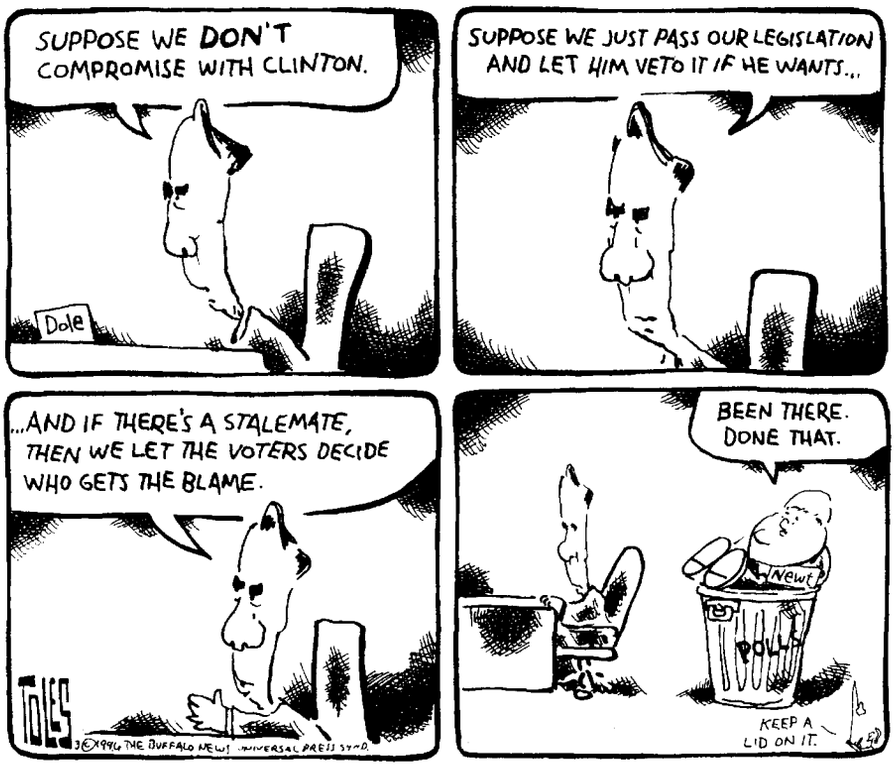
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: The Chinese government has asked Pierre Cardin to design new uniforms for the People's Liberation Army.... Dumas Robinson, the Los Angeles Police Department's oldest recruit at age 65, was dismissed from police academy training on sexual harassment charges.... April looks to be a particularly cruel month for singers Jimmy Buffett, and Bono of U2. Believing them to be drug dealers, Jamaican police opened fire as they disembarked from a seaplane.... Commenting on the stay of a female American astronaut aboard the Russian Mir space station, a Russian space program official said Mir's "micro-climate will definitely be improved," since "the fans will be taken care of in a more timely manner because we know women love to clean, and they will take care of the fans in order to allow less dust in the environment." ... During a speech at a victory rally after the California primary, Bob Dole told his audience, "Like a lot of people in this audience, the war came."


SUPPOSE WE DON'T COMPROMISE WITH CLINTON.
Dole
SUPPOSE WE JUST PASS OUR LEGISLATION AND LET HIM VETO IT IF HE WANTS...
...AND IF THERE'S A STALEMATE, THEN WE LET THE VOTERS DECIDE WHO GETS THE BLAME.
TOLES
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BEEN THERE. DONE THAT.
Newt
POLL
KEEP A LID ON IT.

MAD BRITONS: "The cow is there," says the hero of E.M. Forster's novel *The Longest Journey*. In a room in Cambridge, a group of Englishmen are talking philosophy. Does the cow exist only when I see it, or does it exist independently of me? Forster, who did not know about mad cow disease, grudgingly concedes the European dimension: "If she was there, other cows were there too. The darkness of Europe was dotted with them...." When it comes to animals, Britain has had a paranoid relationship with "the darkness of Europe," protecting its island status with the fiercest quarantine laws in Europe. Britain is proud of its freedom from the contamination of rabies, which is seen as a European problem. Many Britons objected to the Channel tunnel because they felt it would admit "rabies-carrying vermin." Or Europe-carrying vermin, perhaps? Now it seems that the beast is within. Last week, in a sign that April would be the cruelest month for British cows, the European Commission banned the export of British beef after British government scientists conceded that they were unable to account for a new strain of the fatal degenerative brain disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob. The likeliest explanation is that the victims contracted it from eating the meat of cows infected with the similar bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the so-called "mad cow disease." Suddenly the European continent has become an island protecting itself from British vermin. And what do the British do? They blame Europe, of course. The Agriculture Minister, the teasingly named Douglas Hogg, called the European ban "unjustified." And the ironies multiply: it seems likely that the British will slaughter all their cows over 30 months old, while blaming the European Union ban for forcing them to take such drastic measures. But it also seems likely that British farmers will be liable for compensation from funds provided by the E.U.'s hated Common Agriculture Policy.

PLAY WITH THE DEVIL: Last week's House debate, which led the chamber to vote to repeal the 1993 assault weapons ban, was an occasion for high drama. Patrick Kennedy, bearing April's cruelest wounds, invoked the horrors guns had brought upon his clan. While his sermon—"[P]lay with the Devil, die with the Devil!"—may have been a bit overwrought, it hardly justified the ad hominem tirade of GOP elder Gerald Solomon, who shouted Kennedy down with charges that a ban on Uzi-type guns prevents his wife, who lives alone in upstate New York, from defending herself ("*son* ... and don't you ever forget that!"). The image of Mrs. Solomon, waiting for her husband to return, lovingly caressing her Uzi, is not one we're likely to forget. Despite all this hollering, however, the vote was meaningless on two counts: first, since candidate Dole—deli-

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ciously wiggly on an issue that could link him with extremism—won't bring it before the Senate, it represented only a symbolic payback to the NRA, which generously backed Republican House candidates in 1994. Second, lost beneath the bluster is the ineffectuality of the ban itself. It affects only a fraction of deadly firearms, and, even within the affected categories, gunmakers have tinkered their way around Congress' specifications. So what's more tragic? That real progress toward gun control is so hopeless that even a largely cosmetic law is attacked? Or that good Democrats must jeopardize their seats defending it?

CHINA SYNDROME: When China chose not to react to Lee Teng-hui's election victory in Taiwan last week with menacing rhetoric or more missiles, the American press hailed it as a move by Beijing toward peaceful reconciliation with its estranged territories. As if. Moments after the votes were officially tallied, the Chinese transparently announced that they, not Lee, were the real victors, since Taiwan's pro-independence party saw its support slip in comparison to two previous elections. And, in an effort, we suppose, to extend the olive branch even further, the following day a Chinese-controlled preparatory committee voted to dissolve Hong Kong's democratically elected legislature and replace it with a Beijing-appointed council when the Chinese take control on July 1, 1997. Just another cruel-April example of the farce of the free market-democracy continuum. Oh, and the British should take note: the preparatory council decided to retain festivals for Christmas and Easter, but banned the celebration of the queen's birthday.

NOW REMEMBER, BILLY, I DON'T WANT YOU TO ACTUALLY DRIVE IT, JUST KEEP IT TUNED UP AND POLISHED UNTIL I'M PRESIDENT.
SURE THING, DAD!
DOLE
VROOM
LINE ITEM VETO
TOLES
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NOW, DON'T YOU HAVE SOME LEGISLATION TO PASS?

NEOCONS COME LATELY: It has taken a while for many conservatives to tackle the issue of equal marriage rights, and, while some are making serious arguments, for others, the lack of practice shows. Former Quayle staffer Lisa Schiffren opined in *The New York Times* last week that "Whether homosexual relationships endure is of little concern to society. That is also true of most childless marriages, harsh as it is to say." Tell that to the legions of conservative writers who have long argued for the social and psychological benefits of marital stability. Last Sunday, in another *Times* column, the background to her views was revealed: she was recently pregnant. But the more surprising example of lazy thinking was the country's best political columnist, William Safire, whose April is likely to be particularly cruel for homosexuals. At a time when civil rights for lesbians and gay men are hotly debated, Safire glibly equated the issue with legalizing polyandry. In a tongue-in-cheek column, he asked, "Who could oppose this modest proposal to extend connubial rights, including inheritance-tax advantages and benefits blessings to millions of lonely women and angry extra males?" Safire, when he manages to write about homosexual rights at all (this was his first column on the subject in years), discusses them as if they could only be the object of amusement, absurdity and condescension. It's not worthy of him, his column or his readers. Compared to Safire's glibness, Ralph Reed is a beacon of intellectual rigor.

LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND QUOTALESS: An investigation this month by *The Los Angeles Times* has discovered yet another category of "special interest applicants": the rich and well connected. Since 1980, more than 200 initially rejected University of California students were admitted with some intervention from above. At least seventy-five more were let in ahead of hundreds of better-qualified applicants. In one Aprilly-cruel case, the nephew of the millionaire Saudi oil sheik Hisham Nazer applied to UCLA with an SAT score of 700, 600 points below the school's average. Admissions officers rejected him, even after appeal, but a call from his uncle changed their minds. Many of the calls, the *Times* found, were from regents and state officials who had voted to end affirmative action. •

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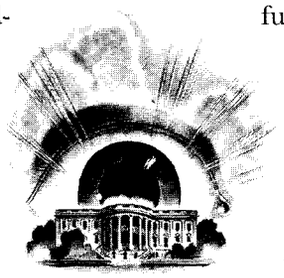
SUCKING UP

By Matthew Cooper

Bill Clinton has never sucked up to me. No little notes saying, "Great article, man." No planting of sympathetic stories in this centrist magazine. No barbecue in the residence. In the times I've interviewed him he's been gracious, offering a perfunctory, but still welcome, "Nice tie." But, as far as sheer courtship of *moi* as a member of the press, that's it. I know, I know, it seems like the height of arrogance to expect the president of the United States to cater to a journalist's whims. And, yet, much of what has ailed the Clintons is their failure to court reporters with the same zeal they have trained on, say, California.

This has consequences. Clinton may be riding high now, but he doesn't have much of a relationship with the press to fall back on when he stumbles, as he inevitably will. (Conservatives worried about a liberal press that's soft on Clinton should know that even Newt Gingrich has publicly acknowledged that Clinton has been skewered by a hyper-negative press.) To the administration's credit, its press relations are better than they were back in 1993, when the pratfalls were many. There was the famed banishment of the White House press corps from the area adjacent to the press secretary's office—a seemingly small matter to those on the outside, but a big deal to those reporters, especially from the wire services, who had come to rely on immediate access to the voice of the administration. Clintonites were almost always late for appointments. Deadlines went unmet. Kenneth Walsh, my colleague from *U.S. News & World Report*, and I once found ourselves in a holding room for over four hours waiting for a senior official. And the Clintonites' paranoia about the press was absurd. "The rift with the media became so wide that even the shell-shocked White House was reluctant to cooperate on even the most benign story ideas," writes Walsh in his fascinating forthcoming history of White House press relations, *Feeding the Beast*. Garnering a few anecdotes, even flattering ones, about what Clinton had been reading was like passing a kidney stone.



Through fits and starts, relations with the press became better. During the détente of David Gergen's tenure, the press secretary's office was opened. And the arrival of Mike McCurry meant that the trains ran on time; more importantly, the press secretary was in the president's inner circle, able to speak with an authority that had been denied his predecessor, Dee Dee Myers.

But pervasive problems continue. On one level, there is still a real fear about sharing inside information about the Clintons. How's the marriage faring? What are the more informal moments in the White House like? How does the president think through issues? In the absence of the White House filling in the blanks, others do it for them—Al D'Amato or Camille Paglia. I suspect the reason why books like *The Agenda* and *Primary Colors* and *Blood Sport* sell so well is that they purport to explain the enigmatic Clintons. Yuppie scum or well-meaning centrists? There's a real hunger to understand who these people are. Still, attempts to satisfy this craving often fail. A few weeks ago, the president walked to the back of Air Force One, where the press sits, to feed the pack. The session was on "psych background" meaning that what was said could not be directly attributed to the president. But the setting was wrong. Since the press pool on Air Force One consists of reporters—especially from the broadcast media—who are loathe to let things go off the record, the session engendered more animosity than goodwill.

There's also been precious little old-fashioned sucking up to the press. When the Clintons do make an effort, they come across as gracious and thoughtful. Hillary Clinton made a few remarks at a recent party for James Carville and stunned reporters there by how funny she was, telling self-deprecating jokes about how she falls for smooth-talkin' Southerners. Why, they asked, do we never get to see her in such relaxed settings?

The most flagrant lapse on the part of the White House was its failure to court the emerging centrist group of columnists and journalists who rose to prominence at about the same time as the Clintons. I'm thinking of *The Washington Post*'s E.J. Dionne, *The Los Angeles Times*'s Ronald Brownstein, *Newsweek*'s Joe Klein and to some degree THE NEW REPUBLIC's Michael Kinsley. Familiar with the details of policy and sympathetic to Clinton's neither-right-nor-left philosophy, these journalists should have been ardently courted by the White House. Could they have been the Ben Bradlees and Hugh Sideys of this administration—sympathetic chroniclers with special access and insight? Hardly. This group is too wary of coddling. They can't be bought with a barbecue. Still: worth wooing.

Instead, they were seldom sought out. Klein tells me he hasn't seen Clinton since he became president, save for running into him at events like Renaissance Weekend. True, Klein hasn't asked for a sit-down but neither have the Clintons made any effort to reach out to one of the most influential journalists in the country, especially one who was pivotal in bringing the Clintons to national attention. "I'm not saying that I wouldn't have written 'The Politics of Promiscuity,' but they certainly didn't make any effort to reach out," Klein says. Morton Kondracke, the columnist, finds that the White House has done little to reach out to him even though

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he describes himself as a New Democrat. "It's stupid of them," says Kondracke. Brownstein says he found administration officials accessible during policy debates but seldom found them wooing him. Although he has "no desire to be the president's buddy," Brownstein wishes the White House was more willing to make the president's thinking available. "If you push, you can get what you need; but they're not proactive," says Brownstein. This is a far cry from, say, the Reagan White House, which not only corralled its own conservative columnists but reached out to centrist voices such as TNR. This White House has yet to assuage the columnists that are sympathetic to it, let alone the columnists on the right, such as Paul Gigot or Arianna Huffington, who might have an occasional kind word for them.

If you talk with folks in the Clinton White House, they abound with explanations for why press relations have been so sour. They feel burned. On still another Air Force One trip, the president came back and said the country was in a "funk." That line, Clintonites feel, was taken out of context and unfairly compared with Jimmy Carter's whining. The White House also notes that George Bush, who did court reporters with private chats, was nonetheless savaged by them.

Cruelty

"Seventy-three years ago, the English poet T.S. Eliot wrote that 'April is the cruelest month.' And Eliot had never even heard of the Internal Revenue Service."
—*The Tampa Tribune*, April 16, 1995.

"April is the cruelest month, wrote poet T.S. Eliot. Must have been a college hoops nut."
—*USA Today*, March 12, 1993.

"As T.S. Eliot once wrote, April is the cruelest month. Quebec's separatists scarcely know which way to turn after the farcical spat over the weekend between their leaders."
—*The Toronto Star*, April 11, 1995.

"April could be the cruelest month for motorists who take to Longueuil streets in unroadworthy vehicles."
—*The* (Montreal) *Gazette*, March 18, 1993.

"April is indeed the cruelest month, if you happen to be an aphid, a slug or a vagrant weed sleeping rough on somebody's lawn."
—*The Times*, April 27, 1994.

"April is the cruelest month for hitters who must face Jose Melendez. The Padre righthander breezed through the first month of the season . . . "
—*The Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1992.

"Jose Melendez sure doesn't consider April the cruelest month. Only Paris has better Aprils than the Padres' righthander."
—*Hartford Courant*, May 10, 1992.

" 'April is the cruelest month,' wrote the poet T.S. Eliot, ' . . . mixing memory and desire.' In the April that features the first global presidential campaign, Boris Yeltsin is reminding both his compatriots and former superpower competitors of the threat to freedom of revanchist apparatchiks. . . ' "
—William Safire, *The New York Times*, April 5, 1993.

" 'April is the cruelest month,' T.S. Eliot wrote. But he's wrong. On Long Island, the worst are January and February, when clouds and snow make winter seem endless."
—*Newsday*, February 7, 1991.

"April is the cruelest month, according to T.S. Eliot. But according to some statistics . . . [d]ivorce and death rates, which vary by month, are highest in March . . . "
—*The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, February 23, 1995.

"Forget April—June and July are the cruelest months. That's when many people put on their bathing suits and weep. The verdict: varicose and 'spider' veins."
—*USA Today*, June 27, 1991.

"April is the cruelest month? Ha! T.S. Eliot obviously never spent August searching for a good movie."
—*The New York Times*, September 1, 1995.

"The 'cruelest month,' T.S. Eliot wrote, is April. Obviously, he was no gardener. Had he been, he would have fingered August."
—Mary McGrory, *The Washington Post*, August 25, 1991.

"To T.S. Eliot, April was the cruelest month, but when it comes to the anniversary of natural disasters, I would choose October."
—*The New York Times*, October 23, 1994.

"If T.S. Eliot had been a father, he might never have written that April is the cruelest month. He would have known that December is far worse. For children, December is synonymous with stress. . . . "
—*The Boston Globe*, December 8, 1994.

"April is the cruelest month, said poet T.S. Eliot. Well, if Eliot had ever spent a summer in Phoenix, he would've picked a different month on which to vent his ennui."
—*The Phoenix Gazette*, May 25, 1995.

"For years, poets and accountants have had us believing that April is the cruelest month. Maybe in the real world that's true, but in the life-and-death world of television, cruel can be any month that ends with a cancellation."
—*The Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1991.

"T.S. Eliot's poem 'The Wasteland' begins by describing April as 'the cruelest month.' But this year in Texas—thanks to the special Senate election—May will be the nastiest."
—*The Houston Chronicle*, January 12, 1993.

"April may be the cruelest month, but May is the month when Mother Nature is prone to blow her mightiest destructive winds through Houston and other parts of the country."
—*The Houston Post*, May 2, 1994.

"Maybe April isn't the cruelest month. Just the schlockiest."
—*The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, May 22, 1994.

DAVID GREENBERG

DAVID GREENBERG is a former managing editor of TNR.

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Still, the White House needs to spend less time orchestrating stagy events and more on the wooing of individual reporters. Todd Purdum of *The New York Times* frames the dilemma faced by his fellow White House correspondents who want a greater understanding of the Clintons: "You're constantly called upon to write about events you've never seen, by people you haven't met, for motives you can't fathom." I suspect that everyone would benefit from a perestroika in White House press relations—especially the public, which would get better stories, ones shaped by an intimate understanding of the president and the first lady. •

ON THE HILL

DO AS THEY DO

By Stephen Glass

It was an idea no politician could afford to oppose: make Congress abide by the same laws it writes for everyone else. Passed nearly unanimously in the early days of the 1994 Republican takeover, the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) was the first tenet of the Contract with America to become law, and a major boon to Newt Gingrich's reputation.

Now, two months after the act went into effect, Congress is limping under the weight of labor laws the private sector has decried for years. Rules requiring paid overtime are busting lawmakers' budgets, their offices are failing OSHA inspections, aides are beginning to unionize, and staffers have filed a flurry of complaints against their bosses. In short, the appeal of living under everybody else's rules has palled pretty quickly.

The bill's architects had hoped that a taste of Congress's own medicine would prompt it to reform workplace rules. Instead, legislators are capitalizing on the very loopholes that private industry has been taking advantage of for ages. "America's last plantation has fallen," one Democratic staffer said. "But the masters are looking to stay in business."

So far the CAA's most debilitating provision is its requirement that congressional offices comply with a 1938 labor law mandating that employees who work more than forty hours a week be paid overtime. But, for as long as anyone can remember, Congress has repaid the long hours clocked by fresh-faced young aides not in dollars, but in the currency of Washington: proximity to power. Not any more.

Consider the typical caseworker. Found in every Senate and House office, caseworkers field simple constituent requests: they help track lost Social Security checks, line up White House tours and perform other such riveting tasks. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Management Foundation, caseworkers earn, on average, $26,000 a year or $12.50 an hour for what's supposed to be a forty-hour work week. In fact, the typical caseworker works fifty-two hours a week. With overtime, they'll be earning $37,700 a year—a 45 percent pay raise.

Trouble is, the CAA allocated no money for overtime, so staffers, who must now keep time cards, overflow the halls of the Hill office buildings at precisely 6 p.m., when their bosses send them home. For the most part, they aren't happy with their new free time. Gone are the days when senators ordered out for pizza and chatted late into the evening with junior staffers. Now those bull sessions cost precious dollars. The overtime rules may even have constitutional implications since a filibuster will now cost the taxpayer about $12,000 an hour in overtime, and the price tag of an all-night session could break six figures.

This is precisely the kind of pressure the CAA's drafters had hoped would push Congress to rework outdated regulation in the private sector. No such luck. Instead, many top congressmen are exploiting a loophole intended to exempt upper-level staff from the strict forty-hour formula and so save the overtime pay. Indeed, at least eleven representatives have creatively labeled *all* of their employees, including those who work the front desk, upper-level staff. Among the loophole pros are Representative James Barcia of Michigan, whom the AFL-CIO rated a perfect 100 on labor issues in 1993, and Representative Bill Thomas of California who, as chairman of the House Oversight Committee, has supervised the CAA's implementation. Overall, the Congressional Management Foundation found that the House and Senate have defined more than half their staff in the "no overtime" category. A December Congressional Research Service report, which told representatives and senators to assume nearly everyone was eligible for overtime, is simply being ignored.

This creative accounting has ignited a record number of complaints. The newly formed Office of Compliance, which handles CAA violations, has recorded 600 requests for information since January 23—twelve times its predecessor's average. While most of the questions deal with wages, the Office of Compliance has also been fielding plenty of requests for information about other laws that now affect congressional staff, like family and medical leave and new sexual harassment guidelines.

All this has made lawmakers nervous, especially since the CAA allows staffers, for the first time, to take their bosses to federal court. The Capitol Hill Women's Political Caucus, a high-profile organization of congressional staffers, announced the night before the CAA went into effect that it would encourage House and Senate aides who have been sexually harassed or discriminated against to sue senators and representatives—a powerful threat in this post-Packwood era. And,

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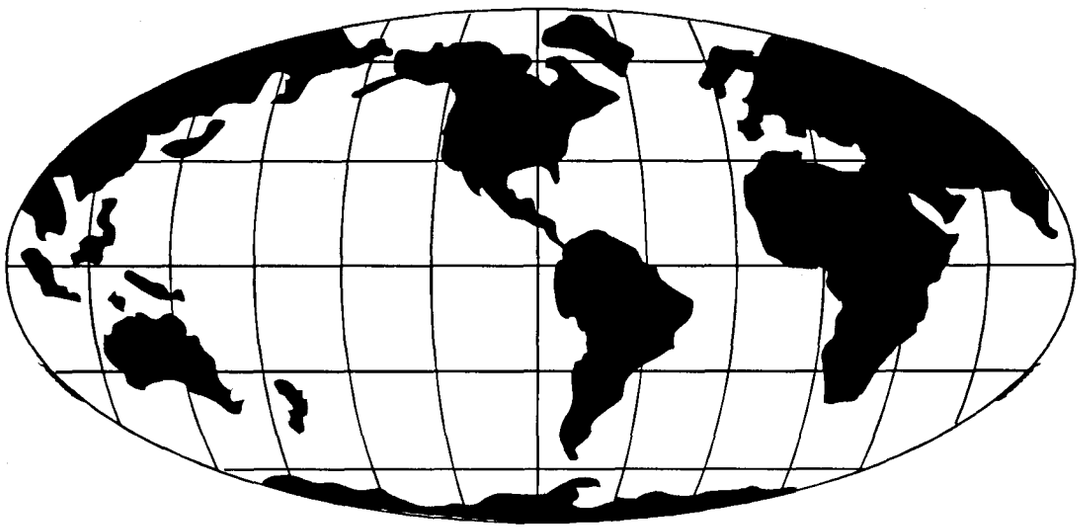

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as well as their own behavior, lawmakers are now liable for nearly all hanky-panky in their office, from that of top aides to that of visiting constituents.

But, here again, Congress is anxiously looking for a way out. Last week, the Oversight Committee passed a gag rule that would make it illegal for anyone to talk about complaints filed against congressmen. Committee chairman Thomas said the gag rule is needed to protect legislators from charges that could be sensationalized shortly before an election.

There's more. The committee also demanded that the Compliance Office issue advisory opinions, a privilege that private businesses can't get from the courts, and one which would shield congressmen from litigation. Perhaps most surprising, the committee passed a provision allowing members to substitute comp time for overtime pay in a way that is illegal in the private sector. To be sure, all of these new regulations have to pass the full House, but members aren't lining up to fight them.

Sandra Boyd, an employment lawyer with the business-backed Labor Policy Association, thinks the new rules contradict the spirit of the CAA. "The point of the law was for Congress to learn about labor laws by living under them," she said. "Some members are in deep denial and still trying to have it the old way."

The abuse of loopholes and manipulation of CAA regulations have prompted some Democratic staffers quietly to begin talks with national unions. While unions won't become legal on the Hill until fall, some groups, like the Capitol Police, have already begun negotiating with the Teamsters and the Fraternal Order of Police.

Meanwhile, OSHA investigators are now beginning to examine the Capitol's physical plant. Members and their staff expect the workplace safety inspections to turn up countless violations in the aging office buildings. Though Congress does not have to comply with OSHA rules until next January, the Office of Compliance is beginning to comb through the 20 million square feet that have just come under its jurisdiction. While no findings will be released until this summer, Capitol Police say drinking water at the force's canine facility was shut off after investigators determined it was contaminated.

Ironically, die-hard opponents of the Occupational Safety Hazards Act, like Majority Whip Tom DeLay of Texas, must now welcome the inspectors into their offices. DeLay, who was one of the Congressional Accountability Act's strongest advocates, finds himself in the awkward position of praising the agency he once likened to the Gestapo, telling *Roll Call* recently that he thought the OSHA inspections were "great." DeLay isn't the only Republican convert to big government intervention. Even the red-meat freshmen are seeing the benefits of OSHA. "We hope they find us to be worse than the worst chicken processing plant in Arkansas," said a House freshman's press secretary. "Then maybe we won't be all piled on top of each other." •

El Paso's Border Patrol hero.

TEX-MEX

By Carlos Hamann

As you drive into El Paso, the first hint that you are entering a seriously conservative town is the sign announcing the exit for Porfirio Díaz street. Porfirio Díaz ruled Mexico from 1876 to 1911. His policies of forced industrialization—inspired by an elite cadre of foreign-educated savants known as *Los Científicos*—led to disparities in wealth and in land tenure not to be seen again in Mexico until the 1990s. His fraudulent re-election in 1910 set off the Mexican Revolution. And you won't find any streets named after him in Mexico.

Here in El Paso, Porfirio Díaz Street overlooks the Rio Grande and nearby Ciudad Juárez, El Paso's much larger Mexican sister city. Porfiristas from Northern Mexico flocked to El Paso when the revolution broke out; as it dragged on, supporters of whichever faction happened to be losing at the moment crossed the border and settled here. Today more than 70 percent of El Paso's 665,000 residents are of Mexican origin. It's common to find families with relatives on both sides of the border. Many El Paso parents send their children to school in Ciudad Juárez to become fluent in Spanish; many Juárez parents send their kids to El Paso schools to be Americanized. The two cities form the largest megalopolis along the 2,000-mile-long U.S.-Mexico border—one vast city, really, divided by an international boundary.

Out of this bicultural stew comes former United States Border Patrol Chief Silvestre Reyes, 51, who wants to represent El Paso in the U.S. Congress. Reyes became a local household name when he managed to halt the daily flood of undocumented migrants into the city in the fall of 1993. If he wins the April 9 runoff to become the district's Democratic candidate, chances are the national press will begin to take notice.

For decades the border at El Paso was nothing but an irrelevant line on a map. Old-timers say there were few restrictions on border crossings until the 1950s. Even into the 1990s anyone with a sense of adventure and $2 to spare could hop on a raft under the downtown Santa Fe bridge in Ciudad Juárez and be ferried to the northern bank of the river. Then all you had to do was climb through one of the many holes in the chain-link fence and dart into a crowd on a busy downtown street when the Border Patrol agents weren't looking.

Instead of stopping the migrants at the riverbank, the Border Patrol preferred to chase them down once they

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ARE THE BENEFITS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION WORTH THE COSTS?

Economist Barbara R. Bergmann cuts through the incendiary rhetoric and offers incontrovertible evidence that affirmative action is the only remedy for the continuing discrimination against men and women of all colors in our society. From debunking the myth that blacks or women "always" win at the expense of the white males, to countering the assertion that affirmative action negatively affects its beneficiaries, Bergmann leads readers through the labyrinth of charges and counter-charges to reveal why affirmative action represents the best—and most moral path—to eliminating racial and sexual discrimination.

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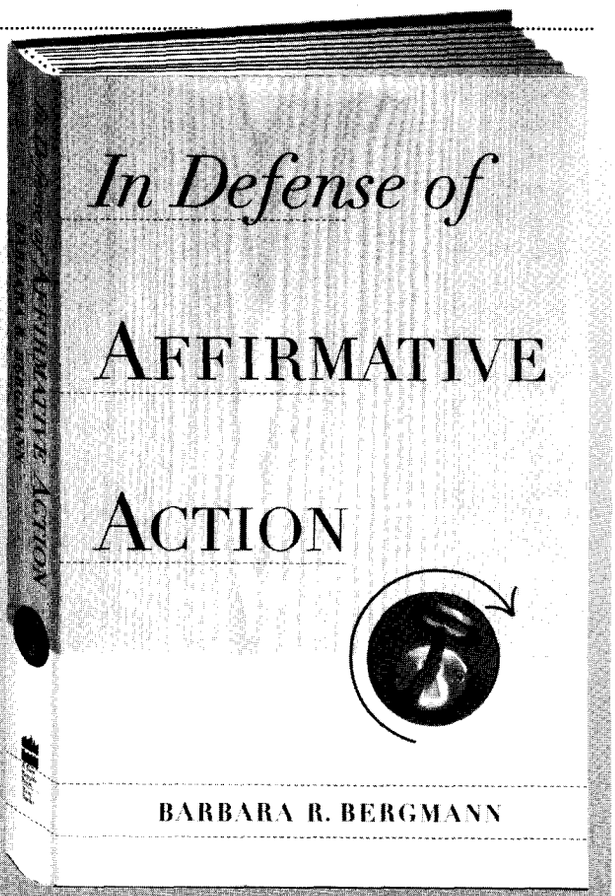

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were inside the city. Unfortunately, this meant that agents often arrested native El Pasoans of Mexican descent whom they mistook for undocumented migrants. In one notorious case a student at Bowie High School was roughed up by Border Patrol agents for refusing to show any proof of residency. The student, faculty and staff of Bowie filed a lawsuit for civil rights violations against the Border Patrol in 1992—and got a favorable settlement.

When Reyes arrived to head the El Paso sector of the Border Patrol in the summer of 1993 he took over an agency with a local reputation rivaling that of roaches and lawyers, overseeing a crossing point for undocumented migrants second in volume only to San Diego. In a little more than two months he dramatically changed this dismal scenario. Instead of waiting for the migrants to run into El Paso, he lined the border with agents around the clock, discouraging anyone from even attempting to cross.

The new tactics were an overnight success. The daily flood of migrants dwindled to a trickle, then virtually stopped. The beatings of local residents ended. Mexican beggars and window-washers vanished from the street corners, and the Juárez rafters went out of business. The crackdown actually hurt downtown merchants, many of whose customers came from rural parts of Mexico and who, because they lacked a fixed job or a verifiable address, couldn't get a legal crossing card. And a University of Texas study showed that migrants traveling beyond El Paso simply skirted the blockade by traveling several miles west into the desert or east along the Rio Grande. But none of that mattered. Reyes's popularity in El Paso soared because migrants were no longer dashing through people's backyards or getting hit as they tried to bolt across the interstate highway. El Pasoans honked their horns as a sign of appreciation whenever they saw Border Patrol agents in their ubiquitous lime-green Suburbans. Poll after poll showed Reyes scoring higher ratings than any area elected official.

But Reyes is more than just an efficient bureaucrat. His amazing popularity has a great deal to do with the uneasy relationship the city's Mexican-Americans maintain with Mexico. Outsiders often see all Mexican-Americans as one undifferentiated ethnic group within the larger Hispanic population. Yet there are important distinctions between those who grew up in the U.S., those who recently immigrated and the undocumented migrant—even when they all come from the same family. And don't mix up your categories: the average Mexican-American resident here considers him or herself a Hispanic from Texas. Call them Latinos and you'll be slapped; call them Chicanos and you might get a broken nose. Carlos Vila, a sociologist at the University of Texas at El Paso and one of the few who has studied this sensitive phenomenon, says Mexican-Americans become more cohesive the farther away they are from Mexico. Along the border they can still easily see the misery that they or their parents fled—Mexican border towns are notoriously poverty-ridden and chaotic—so they try to distance themselves. This is an ideal political environment for someone like Reyes, the man who drew a firm line between Mexican illegal aliens and Mexican-Americans.

In many ways, the mild-mannered Reyes is a Hispanic version of Colin Powell. Like Powell, Reyes comes from a humble background and served in Vietnam. Like Powell, he climbed the institutional ranks—in his case, the Border Patrol—by enthusiastically following rules without questioning policies. Both Reyes and Powell were trailblazers in the early days of affirmative action, struggling against entrenched hostility toward up-and-coming non-whites.

Although Reyes campaigned for the March 12 primary as a pro-life, law-and-order Democrat, his real popularity lies not in what he advocates but in what he personifies: the aspirations and insecurities of thousands of border residents of Mexican descent. He's the local Hispanic farm boy who made good, the man who got mainstream society to accept him as an American citizen first and a hyphenated American second.

Reyes's background is typical of many border residents. Born on a farm in the town of Canutillo, Texas, just outside El Paso, he is the descendant of a paymaster in Pancho Villa's revolutionary army. Young Silvestre spoke only Spanish until he went to grade school. As a child one of his chores at his father's farm was to blow a truck horn whenever Border Patrol agents showed up, signaling the undocumented workers to scatter. As a teen he spent summers working as a migrant laborer in California and the lower Rio Grande valley, sweating side by side with undocumented migrants. (Reyes said he always carried his birth certificate for identification, and on the rare occasion that he was stopped by Border Patrol agents was treated with respect.) He joined the Border Patrol after his Vietnam stint and spent virtually all of his career patrolling the border with Mexico.

Any qualms about being a Mexican-American who's made a career of collaring undocumented Mexican migrants? That's what Reyes calls the "nationality question," and he abhors it. "I find it at best rude, and at worst very questionable," he said. "Just because I'm Hispanic doesn't mean that a special standard should apply to me in terms of my loyalty to this country. The law applies to everyone." While his answer is technically correct, Reyes acts as if he lives in a cultural vacuum. His bicultural background should enable him to offer broad, sensitive solutions to the problems created by undocumented migration. Instead, it's only helped him become a more efficient cop.

Reyes's Villista grandfather must be rolling in his grave, shocked that Silvestre has made a career of keeping out refugees from the failed policies of the new *Científicos*. Now that Reyes has support from the descendants of the Porfiristas in his bid for Congress, the old man's bones might just rise and head south to start a new revolution.

CARLOS HAMANN is a freelance reporter based in El Paso.

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ROME POSTCARD

COSA NOSTRA

By Tom Mueller

This is O.J. Simpson to the tenth power, a world-historic Watergate, yet nobody seems to care. Giulio Andreotti, Italian statecraft incarnate for the last fifty years, is on trial for Mafia collusion and murder. The testimony is full of top-secret Mafia witnesses deposing behind protective screens, clandestine meetings between Andreotti and Mafia overlords, cold-blooded executions of people who knew too much. George Bush, Javier Perez de Cuellar, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and a parade of other notables have agreed to appear as character witnesses. Muammar Qaddafi wants to pay the defendant's legal expenses. But here in Italy few pay much attention.

The Andreotti trial, which began last September, is due to reconvene on April 10. Magistrates argue that Andreotti, a seven-time Prime Minister, has enjoyed a long and fruitful alliance with Cosa Nostra. He furthered Mafia interests in Rome's corridors of power, and his cronies in the judiciary reversed several important Mafia convictions. In return, Cosa Nostra gave his Christian Democratic Party the votes it needed in the South, its electoral stronghold, and eliminated those who threatened the cozy relationship with Rome. Prosecution witnesses claim to have seen Andreotti meet top Mafia bosses on several occasions. A spinoff trial, which concerns Andreotti's role in the murder of Carmine Pecorelli, a journalist executed by the Mafia after claiming to have compromising information on him, also begins next month.

Andreotti, a slight, pallid man with thick square spectacles and the pronounced stoop of a bookworm, indignantly denies the commissioning of murders and explains, pointing to his round-the-clock police escort and flight lists that recorded his Sicilian journeys, that alleged encounters with Mafia heads would have been impossible. Furthermore, he observes, the prosecution's eyewitnesses are Mafia informers, hardened criminals with scores of murders to their credit. He even claims, bizarrely, that he knew virtually nothing about the Mafia until the current proceedings against him began, at which time he started reading up on the subject.

There are serious problems with Andreotti's defense. Though he claims to have taken only commercial flights to Sicily, employees of a charter company say Andreotti used their planes for trips to the island. He swears he never traveled without a security force, yet a fellow party member recalls Andreotti arriving in Sicily without one. Worse still, the head of his security detail, Roberto Zenobi, has admitted distributing an "official" list of Andreotti's Sicilian travels—which he received from Andreotti's secretary—to other members of the detail shortly before they were questioned by the magistrates. And not all the witnesses to Andreotti's secret soirées are criminals. Vito di Maggio, a former bartender at the Hotel Nettuno in Palermo, remembers seeing Andreotti with the noted mobster Nitto Santapaola in May of 1979.

For a neophyte this is sexy stuff. But for Italians it's decidedly ho-hum. There has been no public clamor to televise the proceedings, and news from the trial rarely breaks onto the front page. That's partly because Italians have heard this all before. In the last few years, many of Andreotti's lieutenants and colleagues in the Christian Democratic Party have been convicted of Mafia dealings or have gone into hiding to escape the law. Rumors of Andreotti's own Mafia connections have circulated freely for decades. As Minister of Finance and then Prime Minister during the '70s, he steadfastly defended Michele Sindona, a Sicilian financier later convicted of Mafia money-laundering, extortion and murder. From the mid-'60s onward he met frequently with Licio Gelli, the head of "Propaganda 2," a secret Masonic lodge subsequently linked to a long trail of financial skullduggery, Mafia connivance and right-wing subversion. Andreotti was Prime Minister during the Red Brigade's abduction of Aldo Moro, a secretary of the Christian Democratic Party known for his "openness" to Italy's communists, and he presided over the suspiciously ineffectual attempts to rescue Moro. (Many believe Andreotti and right-wing allies behind the scenes dragged their feet during the rescue operations in order to end Moro's experiment in cohabitation with the left.) Between 1969 and 1985 alone, no fewer than twenty-six criminal proceedings were brought against Andreotti—each overturned without a trial. Cartoonists have long depicted him with the sawed-off shotgun and Sicilian beret of Cosa Nostra and with the eight grasping tentacles of an octopus, a popular symbol of the Mafia.

The trial, then, merely confirms Italians' worst suspicions about their country's post-war politics. The fact that Andreotti is finally coming to trial only after the dissolution of the USSR strikes no one as a coincidence. As a borderland between East and West, Italy was one of the hottest theaters of the cold war. The U.S. government considered it a prime target for Soviet subversion and viewed the Italian Communist Party—at once the strongest in Western Europe and the most open to compromises with more conservative elements—as a virulent strain of communism that could easily infect other parts of Europe. Accordingly, the U.S. was willing to go to great lengths to "protect" Italian democracy.

In March, 1948, on the eve of Italy's first post-war general elections, the National Security Council formu-

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lated a program of military and financial measures to be implemented in the event of a communist victory. In January, 1951, Harry Truman signed Directive 67/3 of the council, which further refined U.S. policy. Point 5 of the document, which was declassified in 1985, reads: "In the event that the Communists gain participation in the Italian government by legal means, or in the event that that government ceases to evidence a determination to oppose the Communists' internal and external threats, the United States should initiate measures [...] designed to prevent Communist domination and to revive Italian determination to oppose Communism." The ellipsis covers a passage that remains secret and that probably contains the hard facts of U.S. policy.

Having built its anti-communist bulwark, the U.S. government stopped at nothing to keep it intact. Hence Giulio Andreotti, a leading Christian Democratic figure since the war and a vital member of the U.S. anti-communist team, was indispensable. This helps explain his amazing political longevity and his ability to weather decades of accusations. But, when the Berlin Wall fell, and the communist threat evaporated almost overnight, the anti-communist bulwark in Italy began to look like an expensive and unsightly dam in the middle of a desert. The many sins committed in the tireless struggle against communism in Italy seemed less forgivable. And Giulio Andreotti, a central figure in this fight, was no longer indispensable. Italians, schooled in the harsh laws of political expediency since Machiavelli, are not surprised by his sudden fall. The sinister allegiances, Faustian bargains and elite collusion showcased in the trial are what most Italians feel national politics have long been about.

But the most important reason the trial leaves most Italians cold is their certainty that, in the end, it will change nothing. The early heroics of anti-corruption "Clean Hands" investigations—which, along with their protagonist Antonio Di Pietro, are rapidly disappearing under mountains of mud—did little to undermine Italian fatalism about politics and justice. Many Italians expect to see the trial bog down, like so many others, in an interminable series of appeals and feel the accused will die long before he is convicted of anything.

As Andreotti and his defunct Christian Democratic Party fade from the scene, Italians watch other leaders and parties move in to fill the void. Already there is strong evidence that members of Silvio Berlusconi's recently formed *Forza Italia* party have ties to Sicily's underworld. It is common knowledge that Berlusconi himself, elected Prime Minister in 1994 and still a central force in Italian politics, built his corporate empire with the lavish patronage of Andreotti and the corrupt old guard. He employed Vittorio Mangano, later convicted as a member of Cosa Nostra, at his private villa. He was a card-carrying member of Propaganda 2. Sound familiar?

TOM MUELLER is a novelist and freelance journalist based in Italy.

Goodies from the Venona files.

HISS'S GUILT

By Eric Breindel

Earlier this month, the National Security Agency released another batch of Soviet intelligence cables intercepted during the Second World War and decrypted under the auspices of the long-secret Venona project. The cables in question, which span a three-year period (1943-1945), were dispatched to Moscow from New York, Washington and various other North American stations.

In serious quarters, the authenticity of the Venona cables has not been challenged. Even hard-left historians long committed to the innocence of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg have accepted them as genuine, despite the fact that the intercepts prove the guilt of the Rosenbergs and their confederates.

The intercepted messages show that Moscow had at least 100 American agents providing Soviet intelligence with classified information during the war years. Even now, many of these agents remain unidentified—due both to the use of "covernames" and to Washington's failure to fully crack Moscow's code. But it's plain that most of the spies were members or close associates of the American Communist Party. And this puts the lie to the ancient claim that American Communists were merely New Deal idealists—"liberals in a hurry"—who didn't constitute any sort of fifth column.

The single most interesting document in the new Venona batch is a March 30, 1945, Washington-to-Moscow message concerning an agent whose covername is "Ales." The accompanying NSA glossary—prepared for internal use only, long before there was any indication that the intercepts might be released to the public—explains that "Ales" is "probably" famed State Department official and ostensible martyr of the American left, Alger Hiss. Among Hiss apologists, much will likely be made of the "probably." But careful perusal of the document—and the relevant corroborating evidence—demonstrates beyond doubt that Hiss was indeed a Soviet agent. In fact, almost everything in the message conforms to representations about Hiss made by previous sources, including Whittaker Chambers, the journalist (and Soviet agent) who first exposed him.

The cable in question was sent to Moscow by "Vadim"—or Anatoli Gromov (actual surname Gorski)—the NKVD's station chief in Washington, D.C. (The NKVD was the forerunner of the KGB.) "Vadim" reports on a "chat" between "A" and "Ales" [Hiss]. According to the codebreakers, "A" is Iskhak A. Akhmerov, a major

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tant Soviet agents ever to serve in the United States. As an "illegal," Akhmerov wasn't attached to an official Soviet mission. He lived in America—mostly in New York and in Washington—under various false names, assisted by forged documents.

Akhmerov, it should be noted, was first identified as Hiss's control-agent by ex-KGB Colonel Oleg Gordievsky in the latter's 1990 memoir. Gordievsky, the KGB's London station chief, defected to the West in 1985; he'd served as a British mole in Soviet intelligence for the prior eleven years. In his book, *KGB: The Inside Story*, Gordievsky recalls having attended a training lecture early in his KGB career delivered by Akhmerov. According to Gordievsky, the "silver-haired" Akhmerov, who seemed to be in his 60s, discussed Hiss and other American agents he'd controlled. Gordievsky—who did not have access to the Venona cables when he produced his memoir—reports without reservation that Alger Hiss's Soviet codename was "Ales." In a 1989 essay in *The New York Review of Books*, intelligence historian Thomas Powers likewise declares that Hiss was known to Moscow as "Ales."

Akhmerov, meanwhile, also turns up in ex-NKVD General Pavel Sudaplatov's 1994 memoir, *Special Tasks*. It seems the high-level "illegal" had direct responsibility not just for Hiss, but also for Michael Straight, a young aide to Interior Secretary Harold Ickes. Straight, a former owner and editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC, knew his Soviet control-agent as "Michael Green." Akhmerov also came to supervise Elizabeth Bentley—later an FBI informant—who knew her control only as "Bill."

Gordievsky maintains that Akhmerov also managed to develop a secret relationship with Harry Hopkins, FDR's top lieutenant and closest political confidante. This claim provoked considerable controversy when *KGB: The Inside Story* first appeared. Indeed, the British historian Christopher Andrew—who co-authored the book with Gordievsky—prevailed upon the latter to depict Hopkins as an "unconscious rather than a conscious" Soviet agent, implying that Hopkins merely saw Akhmerov as a useful back-channel to Stalin.

The Venona documents, however, suggest otherwise. In one cable—released late last year—"deputy" is the covername for a Soviet agent who says he attended a May 1943 meeting in Washington, D.C., at which only two other parties were present. American archival records demonstrate that the meeting in question did, in fact, take place: the attendees were FDR, Churchill and—yes—Harry Hopkins. The decrypted cable makes reference to Roosevelt, to Churchill and to "deputy." The latter, apparently, briefed Akhmerov in detail directly after the session.

The meeting itself focused on an issue of enormous importance to Moscow: whether or not—and when—the Western allies would open a second front in the war on Hitler. Information about how Churchill and Roosevelt saw this matter certainly wasn't meant to reach Stalin—not by a back-channel and not by any other path.

"Vadim's" March 30, 1945, summary of Akhmerov's "chat" with "Ales"—who is identified specifically as a State Department official—confirms Chambers with respect to important details. The Washington-Moscow cable explains that "Ales" has been working with the "NEIGHBORS continuously since 1935." The codebreakers determined that "NEIGHBORS"—a term which appears regularly in the Venona intercepts—denotes a Soviet intelligence organization other than the NKVD. The context in which it is used in other messages indicates that "NEIGHBORS" refers to the GRU—Soviet military intelligence.

Chambers consistently described himself as a GRU—rather than NKVD—agent; and he claimed, by extension, that Hiss, too, was affiliated with the GRU. On this point, many will recall a ridiculous 1992 attempt to "exonerate" Hiss—trumpeted by *The New York Times* and the *New Yorker*—that came crashing down when Russian historian Dimitri Volkogonov, who'd announced his inability to locate archival material implicating Hiss in espionage, admitted that he hadn't examined any GRU files. (Volkogonov, a serious scholar, appears to have been misled by a Hiss acolyte affiliated with *The Nation*, long America's leading forum for Alger Hiss apologia.)

The key point is that Chambers—even on the issue of which Soviet intelligence service employed Hiss—is vindicated by an internal Soviet cable. Also noteworthy is "Vadim's" report that "Ales" had worked as an agent "continuously" since 1935. Chambers testified repeatedly that Hiss began providing information for transmission to Moscow in 1935. To be sure, Chambers also told authorities that he couldn't be sure whether or not Hiss continued to spy for Moscow after 1938, which is when Chambers himself broke with the communist underground. Judging from the 1945 cable, Hiss—undeterred by Chambers's defection and unaffected by the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact—served the Soviets at least through the end of the war.

The newly released document explains specifically that "Ales"—"for some years"—functioned as "the leader of a small group of NEIGHBOR's probationers, for the most part consisting of his relations." Insofar as the term "probationers" translates as agents, it would seem that Hiss was running a small GRU agent-group dominated by "relations," i.e. family members.

Chambers—like Elizabeth Bentley—insisted to the FBI that Alger's brother, Donald Hiss, was also a Soviet agent; Chambers further claimed that Hiss's wife, Priscilla, was a communist who assisted her husband's espionage activities by copying classified State Department documents. Once again, therefore, Venona buttresses Chambers's testimony as well as Bentley's.

The March 30, 1945, cable refers to "Ales's" role as a member of the U.S. diplomatic team at the Yalta summit, which took place earlier that same year. Hiss, of course, was part of the American delegation at Yalta. This, in fact, is why the FBI focused on him shortly after Igor Gouzenko—a code clerk at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa who defected in 1945—told Canadian and British security officials that Moscow had its own agent in Washing-

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ton's Yalta delegation. Gouzenko identified the agent in question as an aide to Secretary of State Edward Stettinius. Hiss, though several levels beneath the Secretary of State in the bureaucratic pecking order, did enjoy a notably close working relationship with Stettinius. The two men even called each other "Alger" and "Ed."

According to the decrypted cable, "Ales" went on to Moscow after the Yalta summit. Here a single question seems central: Did Hiss, in fact, head to Moscow after Yalta? The answer is yes.

Actually, only four Americans who weren't U.S. Embassy staffers did so; most, like President Roosevelt himself, managed to avoid the grueling trip through wartime Russia. The four who traveled to Moscow—all of whom flew on the Secretary of State's plane—included Stettinius himself, two career diplomats and Hiss. None—apart from Hiss—can plausibly have been "Ales."

The chief significance of the "Ales" document consists not in the fact that it proves Hiss's role as a Soviet agent—only the willfully blind still believe in Hiss's innocence. What's important is that the intercepted cable provides strong new evidence that Hiss continued to serve Stalin long after Whittaker Chambers severed his own ties to Moscow. Alger Hiss, it's now plain, was still a Soviet agent in 1945—the year he traveled to Yalta and organized the founding session of the United Nations in San Francisco. No wonder, then, that the young Soviet diplomat Andrei Gromyko—in a rare moment of post-war Soviet-American cooperation—told his U.S. counterparts in the summer of '45 that Moscow wouldn't object to the appointment of Hiss as Secretary-General of the U.N.'s founding conference. The gesture, obviously, wasn't as generous as it appeared.

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The Social Security mess—and how to fix it.

UH-OH

By Matthew Miller

Alan Simpson lurched forward in his chair, glared down from the dais and let fly in anger. It was March 11, and, beneath the grand fifty-foot ceilings in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Wyoming Republican was presiding over the hearing he'd convened to discuss the outlook for Social Security and future retirees. The object of Simpson's scorn was Shirley Chater, the schoolmarmish Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, which this year will write $350 billion in checks to 43 million Americans, providing nearly two-thirds of retirees half their income, lifting 10 million out of poverty. Chater speaks softly, but she carries the biggest stick in American politics. And she'd just peddled an audacious hoax.

The testimony Simpson had received (including my own, as one of the thirtysomething worrywarts whose views he'd solicited) was bleak. Contrary to popular myth, Social Security has for decades paid benefits that are many multiples of what workers and their bosses paid into the system, windfalls that help explain why it's America's most beloved government program, untouchable even in 1995, Newt's year of living dangerously. But the destiny that is demography now means the system is hurtling toward an explosion of red ink; and, absent reform, most younger workers won't come close to getting back what they paid in.

Chater begged to differ. Under questioning, however, she confessed to having counted only workers' Social Security taxes in her analysis of the system's return on investment, not employers' matching contributions, which economists agree are "paid" by workers through lower wages or benefits. Simpson was livid. "It really has to be Disneyland," he sputtered. He railed at Chater about a Social Security trust fund "without the trust." He urged younger Americans to get into the debate before seniors' lobbies left the cupboard bare. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, meanwhile, fretted that talk of privatizing the system, once unthinkable, now threatened to unravel one of America's proudest social-policy achievements. "We'll lose the whole notion of a government-based system," he lectured Chater, unless its defenders offered solutions, and fast.

What's going on with Social Security that has both prairie conservatives and New York liberals up in arms and "independent" officials trying to hide the truth? Picture the fallout when it dawns on the 80 million voters under 40 that they'd be better off investing their payroll taxes for their retirement themselves, and you'll see why Social Security is poised to open brand new fault lines in American politics. Beyond eye-glazing numbers, fears of insolvency and tactical demagoguery on all sides, Social Security's dilemma will soon prompt

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the renegotiation of a social contract in which every generation—indeed, every American—has a major financial and moral stake.

Thinking sensibly about the future of the nation's most successful government program requires an unblinking look at its past. Today's troubles are the legacy of sixty years not only of undisputed gains but of pervasive myths and unintended consequences that defenders of Social Security's chastity prefer to ignore. The question of how to provide security for the elderly without starving the nation of resources for other priorities has been a tension in Social Security from its inception. Its founders felt that the large transfers from young to old implicit in a "pay-as-you-go" system funded by workers were justified, given that seniors in Depression days were often desperate. Even then, however, they recognized the tradeoffs. "The pattern cannot be larger than the cloth," wrote the program's Advisory Council in 1938; protection of the aged couldn't come "at the expense of ... impairing such essential services as education and public health or of lowering of the standard of living of the working population." "No benefits should be promised or implied," that report added prophetically, "which cannot be safely financed not only in the early years of the program, but when workers now young will be old."

FDR himself stressed the notion of limits as the flip side of largess. "This act does not offer anyone an easy life," he said in a 1938 fireside chat. It would "furnish that minimum necessary to keep a foothold; and that is the kind of protection Americans want." Indeed, Phillip Longman, in a provocative new book, *The Return of Thrift*, argues that Social Security was enacted largely to beat back costlier demands for universal old-age assistance championed by Francis Townsend, whose 10 million followers made him the one-man AARP of his day. Confining Social Security's benefits to those who had first contributed payroll taxes was the ingenious way to limit government's exposure, while giving Roosevelt the illusion of insurance he famously needed so that "no damn politician" could ever scrap his plan.

In both senses, this "contributory" design worked. In 1940, less than 1 percent of the elderly received Social Security. Even as late as 1953, less than half the elderly got benefits, since they'd either retired before the system started or hadn't contributed long enough to qualify. Only in the '60s did America's new policy hubris spark the huge expansions that contained the seeds of today's reckoning. But these were heady days. In 1967, Nobel economist Paul Samuelson wryly quipped that "the beauty about social insurance is that it is actuarially unsound," relying on a growing population and rising real incomes to pay each generation of retirees more than they paid into the system. "A growing nation," Samuelson concluded, "is the greatest Ponzi game ever contrived." Bob Ball, a program official and advocate who has figured in these debates for half a century, captured the spirit when he wrote that "'a minimum income for all' might have been a stirring objective when it was proposed by Sidney and Beatrice Webb about 1910, but we can do much better than that in the United States in 1966."

For retirees, the pleasant surprises had just begun. In 1972, benefits were increased across the board by 20 percent. Then, in what Richard Nixon would call his biggest economic mistake, they were indexed to inflation. Ironically, raising benefits each year by the consumer price index was conceived as an effort to cap the benefit bidding wars that had become a bipartisan pre-election ritual. Then came the great inflation of the 1970s. A disastrous and inadvertent "double indexing" in the new benefit formula made matters worse, showering billions in mistaken windfalls for several years. (When this error was finally fixed in 1977, the extraordinary "Notch Baby" lobby was born, furious at being denied their "entitlement" to this excess.)

In the late 1970s, benefits were tweaked again to rise automatically in tandem with real wages, thus promising each successive cohort of retirees higher real benefits. All told, in the 1970s benefits grew *ten times faster in real terms than did the number of Americans aged 65 and over.* Not only were these growth rates unaffordable in the long run; in the short term, they unfairly helped seniors hog the entire "peace dividend" from the end of the Vietnam War. The prospect of ever-rising benefits, moreover, probably suppressed the savings people undertook to plan for their own retirement. Such personal responsibility seemed less urgent, after all, when the share of pre-retirement earnings replaced by Social Security was rising from 38 percent in 1974 to 51 percent in 1981.

With payroll tax revenues unable to keep pace, this cost explosion brought the system's finances to the brink of crisis, prompting the big bipartisan fix of 1983. Those reforms raised payroll taxes, taxed benefits for the first time and trimmed future costs by slowly phasing in the higher retirement age of 67 during the first quarter of the next century. Still, typical workers retiring today with $11,000 in Social Security get three times more in real terms than did their grandparents in 1940.

What's the moral of this story? After decades of expansion, FDR's "foothold" has expanded enough to make the tradeoffs foreseen by the system's founders ripe for revisiting. Only a grinch could grumble about the most effective anti-poverty program in history; but only a fool would fail to ask whether the Ponzi scheme is sustainable, and at what price. Today, $15 billion in Social Security goes annually to households with retirement incomes of more than $100,000; $60 billion to those with more than $50,000. "We have to go to seniors and say, 'Look, we can't keep this up,' " says Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey, a Democrat. "Yes, poverty is a concern. But please don't tell me that every American over 65 is foraging in the alley for garbage or eating dog food. They're going to Vegas with their COLAs—while kids don't have computers in class."

Kerrey's right: thanks to our aging population, longer lifespans, generous benefit hikes and stagnant

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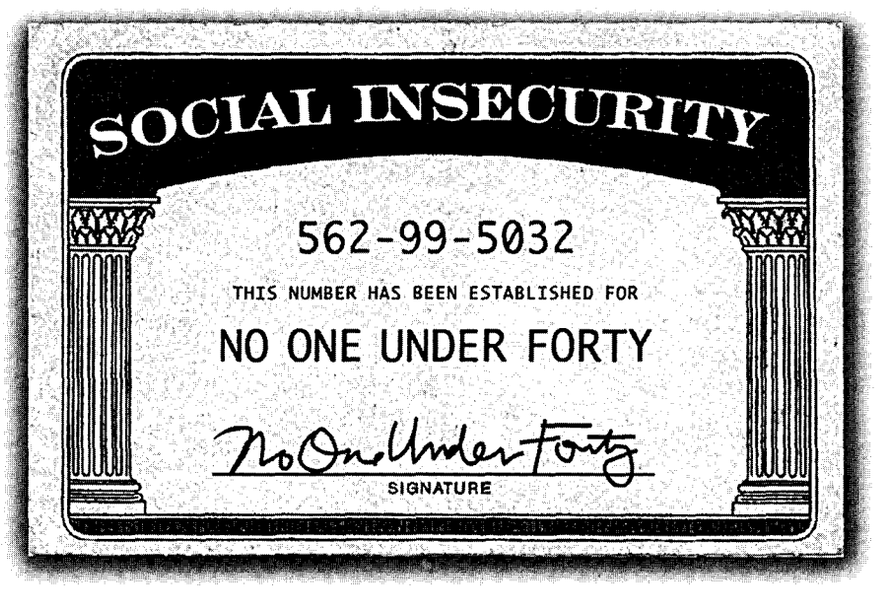
growth, the one thing certain about Social Security is that before the baby boom retires something will give. Call it Ponzi's revenge. There were seven workers paying into the system for every retiree in 1950. In 1990 there were five; by 2030 there will be fewer than three. Life expectancy, meanwhile, has increased by fourteen years since Social Security was enacted, while the retirement age has yet to budge from 65, meaning benefits are drawn far longer.

Financially, these trends mean the "pay-as-you-go" nature of Social Security, in which today's workers are taxed to fund the retirement of their parents, simply can't continue without big tax hikes or benefits cuts for tomorrow's workers. If you're under 40, the first question is: How high can taxes go? Payroll taxes, which hit low- and middle-income families the hardest (since they're imposed only on the first $62,700 of earnings), have already risen 3 percent per decade since the 1950s. At today's combined worker and employer rate of 15.3 percent (including Medicare and disability), they're already higher than income taxes for most Americans. Flat taxer Steve Forbes could have saved his $30 million: thanks to the payroll tax, the effective rate paid by families earning the median $40,000 income is already the same as that facing families earning twice as much.



And that's just today. Without reform, as we slip the bill for an astonishing $8 trillion in unfunded Social Security promises to our kids, Social Security costs will rise from 12 to 17 percent of payroll by 2030. Toss in Medicare, and we're talking a combined tab of 33 percent of payroll. Skeptics argue reasonably that this payroll burden could soar as high as 40 percent, since the official forecasts—supervised by Commissioner Chater, of the Shady Statistic—are rosier than anything the economy has experienced in the last twenty years. The alternative to this tax holocaust? Benefit cuts of 20 to 35 percent, depending on how long we wait to act.

Unfortunately, the forces leading the charge for inertia have the upper hand, thanks to the Three Great Myths of Social Security that they, and petrified politicians, refuse to debunk:

You're just getting back what you paid in. Consider the facts (as documented by Gene Steuerle of the Urban Institute). Early generations of beneficiaries paid in little and rode the rising benefit wave. The result? The average one-earner couple retiring in 1960 got back eleven times what they paid in (after accounting for inflation and interest). By the early 1980s, thanks to the growing payroll tax bite, that average couple had to scrape by on four times what they paid in. But in absolute dollars those retirees (many still collecting) enjoy the biggest windfalls Social Security will ever bestow. How big? On lifetime payroll contributions of $50,000, they receive an astonishing $210,000 in benefits for a net lifetime "profit" of $160,000 (all in 1993 dollars). For many boomers retiring in 2010, and the bulk of the Generation Xers who come after, the lifetime loss will run to the hundreds of thousands.

Social Security is "progressive." It's one thing to pay windfalls, quite another to save your biggest bonanzas for retirees with the highest incomes. But this fact—that Social Security is regressive within generations—is not well understood. It's commonly argued that the regressive payroll tax through which the system is financed is more than offset by the progressive tilt of its benefit structure, which gives lower-wage workers a higher percentage of their pre-retirement pay. But, as the Urban Institute's Steuerle has stressed, the system still ladles out larger amounts of money the richer you are. This isn't a paradox, because the benefit formula is based on wages. A lawyer who gets a 25 percent "replacement rate" on his eligible earnings will collect more money during his retirement than a dishwasher who gets 50 percent of his. This trend is compounded by Social Security's spousal benefit, which (unlike that of most other nations) gives spouses 50 percent of the worker's benefit regardless of income level, so that more money goes to better-off spouses. In this respect, Social Security resembles our other great regressive entitlement, the mortgage interest deduction, which offers a big housing subsidy to someone like Arianna Huffington, while Arianna's maid, if she rents, gets no subsidy at all.

It's OK, there's a trust fund. Remember how awful it was when you realized there wasn't a Tooth Fairy? Well, brace yourself for another rude awakening: the Social Security trust fund is an accounting fiction. While it's true that about $30 billion more comes in today via Social Security taxes than gets paid out in benefits, that

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"surplus" is immediately invested in Treasury bills, in effect loaning the money to Uncle Sam to mask the deep deficits in the rest of the budget. The so-called surpluses building up in this trust fund are thus nothing but IOUs. Making good on them when the baby boom retires won't be pretty, since by that time (starting in 2013, if you believe Ms. Chater) we'll be paying out far more in Social Security than payroll taxes bring in. The tragedy is that today's "surpluses" were designed by 1983's reformers to add to national savings, in hopes of boosting economic growth before the big bills came due. Instead, they became an easy way to evade hard choices in the rest of the budget. For the record, the head-in-the-sand crowd insists these trust funds (there's one for Medicare, too) are as "real" as any private retirement account holding Treasury bonds. Maybe it's time we switched to a clearer label: the "Pass the Huge Tax Hike to the Kids" Funds.

The force of these myths in preserving the status quo adds generational insult to injury when it comes to government priorities already dramatically skewed to favor the elderly at the expense of children and long-term growth. The federal government spends eleven times more on each senior than on each child under 18. (Adding in state and local spending for public education lowers that ratio, but not materially.) Today's deficits, a function of these choices and our refusal to pay for them, consume half our meager national savings, dooming the rising generation to a stagnant economy and depressed wages. Fear of the seniors' lobby takes so many benefits off the table that both parties must slash forward-looking investments in R&D and infrastructure to show even bogus paths to budget balance, while half of eligible kids are told we can't "afford" their Head Start. One in five American children—15 million, at last count—live in poverty, a higher rate than any other age group. Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, meanwhile, who differ little on these arrangements, will shortly swear that this presidential election is all about the future.

What is to be done? None of this is a brief for generational war, though, given the long odds against halting the madness anytime soon, a little generational self-defense wouldn't hurt. For starters, we could enact a successor package of modest 1983-style reforms, around which broad consensus has already gelled as analysts peer with dread over the horizon. By conventional standards, even these steps—likely to be offered by Social Security's official Advisory Council, whose overdue report is expected by May—require political "courage." But, compared to the Ultimate Fixes we'll get to in a minute, they're a walk in the park.

Tax benefits. Unlike most advanced nations, we tax only a small portion of Social Security benefits today. That's not fair. Why should an elderly couple with $40,000 in retirement income pay far less in taxes than a young family with two kids and the same earnings? (Especially when you consider that the seniors have put their mortgage and college expenses behind them.)

Bring uncovered state and local workers into Social Security. While participation in Social Security is compulsory for virtually all forms of employment, 4 million of today's 22 million state and local government workers still aren't included, thanks to old sensitivities about federalism that have eroded only piecemeal over the years. Bringing them in would help fund the system with new payroll taxes immediately, while most of these workers won't collect benefits for many years.

Raise the retirement age faster. We agreed to go to 67 in 1983, but, in the usual gutsy way, that increase proceeds incrementally—by two months each year starting in 2003. Then, inexplicably, between 2008 and 2019, there's no increase at all. Legend has it that congressional staffers intervened to make sure their own eligibility wouldn't be delayed. Raising it instead by three months a year, to 68 by 2008, would be fairer, given our lengthening lifespans. Remember, it's really an eligibility age, not a retirement age. You can always retire earlier; you just won't be entitled to full Social Security benefits.

Together, these and similar reforms too dull to detail would push the system's cash-flow crisis back a few years and shave up to a third from today's long-term imbalance. Yet they do nothing for the two biggest problems we face: the big losses younger workers can now expect on their payroll taxes; and the urgent need to raise national savings (and thus investment) to spark the growth to pay for all those graying boomers. Broadly speaking, the big thinking on these questions falls into three camps: Social Democrats, Privatizers and Progressives.

Social Democrats. Brookings Institution economist Henry Aaron, typical of the breed, says the "beginning of wisdom" on Social Security is to calm down, since its cost will rise by only 2 percent of GDP when the baby boom retires. Well, that may be the beginning of wisdom, but the next installment is that 2 percent of GDP is a helluva lot of money—in today's dollars, an extra $140 billion a year. And that's before we add the bill for Medicare, slated to rise by another 5 percent of GDP! If you think public budgets are shortchanging the future today, such complacency is appalling. What inspires it? Social Democrats argue that entitling everyone to similar government benefits creates common interests across social classes. They're convinced that, without this, support for programs that redistribute money to the needy would erode. (See "It's Christmas: Let's Means-Test!," TNR, January 8 & 15.) Such faith can be so blinding, however, that it's led Bob Ball, the preeminent Social Democrat on today's Advisory Council (and Ms. Chater's predecessor from 1962-73), to proffer a deception masquerading as an innovation that "saves" the system.

Ball's plan, which enjoys the support of six of the Advisory Council's thirteen members, leaves soaring benefits untouched. To be able to pay them and raise returns to young workers, he'd invest up to 40 percent

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of the trust fund in the stock market, to take advantage of the higher returns historically available there. As details have come out, concerns about Ball's plan have focused on the risk that market crashes could imperil retirement security; or on the specter of Robert Reich's secret plan for corporate America once Uncle Sam owns one-seventh of the stock market.

In economic terms, however, the real sin is that Ball's scheme is a shell game. Here's why: if trust fund monies are put into stocks, then someone in the private sector will have to buy the Treasury bills that Social Security picks up today. The net result (along with a risk of higher interest rates) is merely to shuffle asset ownership in the economy, with Social Security's higher paper returns offset by somebody else's lower returns. There's no increase in overall national savings and investment, the first litmus test a reform plan must pass to be credible. "I think there's a lot in what you say," Ball admitted when I raised this critique. Then why go this route? Ball didn't think it politically feasible to call for an immediate tax hike and to put these new monies (which would represent increased national savings) into equities. Between the rock of his reluctance to cut benefits and the hard place of his refusal to raise taxes Ball—whose career has heretofore been a testament to enlightened public service—has essentially told the next generation, "You're on your own."

Privatizers. A motley crew that includes drooling Wall Street brokerages, the libertarian Cato Institute and Fidel Vargas, the 27-year-old Democratic mayor of Baldwin Park, California (and the Advisory Council's token Generation Xer), privatizers are obsessed with the higher returns young workers could earn on their own. But the only question that matters is the one they typically duck—how to get from here to there. The trick in switching midstream from "pay-as-you-go" to a prefunded private retirement system is that one generation has to pay twice: first for the retirement of its parents and then for its own, since younger folks in a private scheme will start paying for themselves. Chile, whose successful privatization of Social Security these reformers love to tout, paid for the change thanks in part to the 5 percent of GDP budget *surplus* they were running when they switched. No such luck here.

The Advisory Council's privatization option—which, in testament to how fast the debate is changing, will get five of thirteen votes—would spread the transition costs, relying on a seventy-year sales tax of 1 percent and more than $1 trillion in new debt, both sure to be political showstoppers. It would dedicate half the current payroll tax to a safety-net pension pegged at 70 percent of the poverty line, while forcing workers to put the other half into personal accounts they'd invest among dozens of approved plans. Notice, by the way, what's happened: even the "right" in these debates would compel workers to save, demonstrating the consensus for paternalism in making sure citizens plan for retirement.

Indeed, in a glimpse of what entitlement debates will look like in the future, the old labels serve as poor guides to instincts and alliances. In June, for example, former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm, a social liberal, will unveil a bold "thrift plan" developed jointly with the conservative National Taxpayers Union Foundation that would abolish the trust fund. The risk for well-intentioned privatizers, of course, is that the Social Democrats could be right; in their lust to replace Social Security entirely, we'll end up so far from today's communitarian ethic that even a minimum floor of pension protection will lose political support.

Progressives. Fortunately, there's an equitable and sensible middle ground, occupied by those like Ned Gramlich, the University of Michigan economist who chairs the Advisory Council, and Senators Kerrey and Simpson, who aim to increase national savings while preserving the essence of Social Security. The Kerrey-Simpson legislation, for example, would divert 2 percent of today's payroll tax into mandatory worker savings accounts. To fund the "gap" they'd create, without having to raise payroll taxes, they'd impose limits on benefits and cost of living adjustments for better-off senior citizens, assuring today's windfall winners a share in the solution. They'd also phase in a higher retirement age of 70 and index it after 2030 to rise with increases in lifespan, a step Bob Dole supported as far back as 1983. For equity's sake, they'd allow heavy laborers, who can't be expected to work as long, say, as NEW REPUBLIC editors, to collect generous disability earlier.

If Bob Ball's stock market shuffle offers no solution, and the Chilean imitators' looks too final (and impractical), the Progressive combination of mandatory private savings and fair benefit reductions is our best hope to preserve the original spirit of Social Security and still give the rising generation a fighting chance. Politically, this option has the virtue of being every zealot's second choice. Yes, critics will say it's a way station on the path to replacing Social Security. And over time, if the outlook isn't stabilized by these reforms, that's possible. But small, officially mandated accounts could instead have a multiplier effect as part of broader government efforts to persuade Americans to save more. A renaissance of thrift would make all these problems more manageable.

With the Advisory Council's imminent report, the curtain is just rising on this debate. Unless Ross Perot makes reform a battle cry in his latest quixotic effort, however, the bipartisan doctrine of Mutually Assured Demagoguery should keep Social Security a million miles from the campaign. "The only thing comforting about an unsustainable trend," says Herb Stein, an economist at the American Enterprise Institute and former Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, "is that it can't go on forever." Whether we start now, however, or wait until the solutions and the politics become even tougher, could spell the difference between phased-in fixes and generational showdown. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Fathering and Faltering

Populate the screen with the past, when you can, and you may enrich a slender film—or rather, you'll see how it has been enriched. To **Jack and Sarah** (Gramercy), for instance, Judi Dench brings along her early career in Shakespeare ingénues, her growth into *Mother Courage*, her Mistress Quickly in Branagh's *Henry V*. Ian McKellen, currently available in *Richard III*, has Shakespeare, some Chekhov and Shaw and Farquahar in his train. Eileen Atkins, along with much Shakespeare, has *Saint Joan* and *Medea* behind her, along with two versions of Virginia Woolf, her one-woman show *A Room of One's Own* and the two-person show with Vanessa Redgrave, *Vita and Virginia*. And these three people are only supporting players in this film. The leading actor is Richard E. Grant, the scathing rhetorician of *How to Get Ahead in Advertising* and *Withnail and I*.

No wonder we pay attention to *Jack and Sarah*, confectionary though it is. The cast enlarges the screenplay, which was seemingly compounded by the writer-director Tim Sullivan out of Neil Simon's *Chapter Two* and Coline Serreau's *Three Men and a Cradle*. A young man's wife dies, and he is faced with the bleakness of going on alone; this is blended with his desperation at taking care of an infant. (The wife died in childbirth.) Sullivan was so eager to tie in with a predecessor that he engaged the cinematographer, Jean-Yves Écoffier, who shot Serreau's film.

Sullivan directs briskly enough, though the opening bodes dimly—ten minutes of horseplay about a nervous prospective father. Once the wife dies, the picture brightens, because then the full force of the supporting cast comes into play. Dench is Grant's mother, Atkins his mother-in-law, and McKellen is one of those well-educated tramps whom we first met in American comedies of the 1930s. They, and others, give additional verity to the problems of the frenetic Grant. Enter the lively, with-it American actress Samantha Mathis, recently seen to no advantage in *Broken Arrow*, as the nanny whom Grant engages. Of course we know the ending, but it's agreeable traveling there, and the plot has a couple of twists near the end.

What's particularly pleasant is that the sterling actors who are involved neither patronize the piece nor kid themselves. The result is a flavorsome piece of candy.

Apparently out of sheer perversity, the Disney organization is trying to upset my thesis. Hollywood Pictures, one of the Disney labels, recently released **Before and After**, a film just as brilliant as its title, through which two superior talents, Meryl Streep and Liam Neeson, plod uselessly. It's about the parents of a teenager suspected of murder, and it ought to skip even the video shelf and go straight to the dust bin. I've rarely seen two fine actors hoping so fervently that no one was watching.

Another Disney group, Touchstone Pictures, persuaded Antonio Banderas to appear in **Two Much**. Again, a scintillating title. Banderas isn't quite at Streep-Neeson level, but he is a redoubtable performer with spontaneous charm, and as even this wretched picture shows, he can deal with the physicalities of farce. Appearing with him are Melanie Griffith and Daryl Hannah, two biggish names of littlish talent.

The story, derived from a Donald E. Westlake novel, begins with a swindle last seen in *Paper Moon*: a con man scans the obituary pages for a likely prospect, then hits the widow for payment of a non-existent debt incurred by the deceased. In this case Banderas is a low-grade Miami art dealer. Through one swindling attempt he gets entangled with two rich sisters, Griffith and Hannah, and has to pose as twins. It's not exactly a new idea to have the same actor play two look-alikes—I doubt that the author of *Twelfth Night* thought it was a new idea—but Banderas manages to squeeze some chuckles out of it.

The director, Fernando Trueba, who co-wrote the screenplay, made *Opera Prima* and *Belle Epoque*, among others, both of which had their pleasures. Trueba was once a film critic in his native Spain. What comment would that critic have made about a talented Spanish director who accepted this dreary assignment just to hit Hollywood?

Banderas was brought into films by Pedro Almodóvar and caused his first international sensation in Almodóvar's *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* Ah, those were the days, back there in 1990. Banderas, as he shows when he gets adequate material, has lost nothing, but Almodóvar is losing his teeth. His recent films, such as *High Heels* and *Kika*, have had little of the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Fargo. *At last—a recommendable Coen brothers opus. This yarn of kidnapping and murder in snowy Minnesota wobbles markedly in tone, but the comic parts* are *comic. (Reviewed 3/25/96)* **Lamerica.** *Unique and unforgettable. A young Italian swindler and an old ex-political prisoner in post-Communist Albania. History enfolds us. (1/29/96)* **Land and Freedom.** *A young English communist goes to fight in Spain in 1936. The conclusion is puzzling, but Ken Loach's recreation of the times is gritty, strong. (4/1/96)* **The Star Maker.** *Giuseppe Tornatore, who made* Cinema Paradiso, *once again embraces Sicily and Sicilians. If the tale wobbles a bit, who cares? The Sicilians are wonderful. (4/8/96)* **—SK**

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old Almodóvar bite, and his latest, **The Flower of My Secret** (Sony Pictures Classics), is slack-jawed sentiment. (It, too, has a reminder of old Hollywood—*Theodora Goes Wild*, in which Irene Dunne was secretly a best-selling author.)

Once again Madrid is the setting, and once again we see some familiar Almodóvar faces—Marisa Paredes, as the secret novelist, the grim-jawed Chus Lampreave and Rossy de Palma, the ambulatory Picasso painting. The story consists of the novelist's longing for her absent army-officer husband, her agreement to write book reviews for an editor who falls for her, her discovery of her husband's infidelity and other dredgings. All through the picture, instead of the old Almodóvar cackle, we hear mush plopping from the pot into the bowl.

Question for Almodóvar: Is it possible to recover impertinence?

The shockingly premature death of Krzysztof Kieslowski, at 54, makes me hope that his best film, of those I've seen, will get adequate release here. So far, *A Short Film About Love* has had only a few very limited engagements in the U.S. It's a subtle, perceptive film about the force of absolute devotion—an adolescent boy for a thirtyish woman—done with great yet reticent skill, and it's free of the sometimes obtrusive aestheticism in Kieslowski's work. It aches with truth.

Serious American filmgoers are not surfeited these days with rewarding fare. Why should this exceptional picture be allowed to languish? •

The contradictions of Catholic anti-Semitism.

The Hidden Encyclical

By Frederick Brown

In 1940, Pius XII, who became pope on March 2, 1939, established the policy of political "neutrality" that was to make him a mute witness of German atrocities. "To give testimony to the truth" is what he promised in his first encyclical, quoting Saint John, but that promise went unfulfilled. When English, French and Polish bishops called for a crusade against Nazism, Pius urged Catholics on either side to fight valiantly and characterized the war itself as a manifestation of God's will. When Germany invaded Poland, he lamented the spilt blood "of countless human beings" in a pronouncement so careful not to assign guilt that the Gestapo let German priests read it from pulpits uncensored. And when, several months later, Hitler escaped an assassination attempt, the papal nuncio in Berlin hastened to deliver Pius's personal congratulations.

"I fear that history will reproach the Holy See with having practiced a policy of selfish convenience and not much else," Cardinal Eugène Tisserant wrote to Cardinal Suhard, archbishop of Paris, in June 1940. He had just vainly implored the pope to warn Catholics that every individual should consider himself duty bound to honor the dictates of his conscience above criminal instructions from a superior. "This is extremely sad, especially for those of us who have lived under Pius XI. Everyone [at the Vatican] is sure that after Rome has been declared an open city, members of the Curia will not have to suffer any harm; it's a disgrace."

Cardinal Tisserant's conviction that things would have been different had Pius XI survived—that the former pontiff, born Achille Ratti, would have suffered martyrdom rather than favor modern-day barbarians with an indulgent silence—was not his alone. Pius XI had indeed always stood tall in defense of religious authority. Hitler and Mussolini found him vexatious at best, and his most famous pronouncements—*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, in 1931, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, in 1937, *Divini Redemptoris*, also in 1937—cry out against totalitarian idols. But Tisserant almost certainly knew something else besides.

What Tisserant knew, as he recalled years later, was that on the desk of Pius XI when he died lay the draft of an encyclical denouncing racism and anti-Semitism. Titled *Humani Generis Unitas*, or *The Unity of the Human Race*, this document was consigned by Pius XII to the Vatican's secret archive, but it has recently been published, along with an account of the tenacious detective work that rescued it from oblivion, in a volume

Frederick Brown is the author most recently of *Zola* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

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called *L'Encyclique "cachée" de Pius XI* (*The "Hidden" Encyclical of Pius XI*), written by Georges Passelecq and Bernard Suchecky, about whom more will be said in due course.

Seen in broad perspective, Pius XI's seventeen-year pontificate was largely animated by an ideal of unity. Succeeding Benedict XV three-and-a-half years after World War I, Ratti upheld the ideal on a European continent still rife with conflict, among peoples shorn of all that had once anchored them in space and time: family, boundaries, traditions, institutions. This bookish man, long employed as prefect of the Vatican Library, had been known until his election at age 65 for his paleographical scholarship; but now he transformed himself into a zealous missionary.

While fostering the Pax Christiana by every available means, and especially through a movement called Catholic Action, which recruited laymen to propagate faith and morality in public life, he negotiated agreements that gave the Church itself some measure of protection from the heaving ground of national politics. One such pact was the Lateran treaty wherein Vatican City acquired sovereign independence; Mussolini (the spokesman for King Victor Emmanuel III) guaranteed papal inviolability and recognized Catholicism as the only state religion of Italy, with its priesthood authorized to exercise pastoral care, to teach, to perform marriages, and so on. In another Concordat signed four years later, on July 22, 1933, the Holy See and the German Reich approved thirty-four articles which, among much else, defined the legal status of German clergy, formulated procedure for the appointment of bishops, guaranteed the maintenance of confessional schools, excluded the Church from politics and vouchsafed it a state subsidy.

To those who found this diplomacy objectionable, Pius XI replied that he would deal with the devil himself if it were in the Church's interests. What soon emerged, however, was that the devils with whom he dealt had no intention of keeping their word. Broken pacts thus gave rise to aggrieved encyclicals. In Italy, Mussolini's regime respected the administrative stipulations of the Concordat, but it mercilessly harried organizations, Catholic Action above all, that offered a moral and psychological refuge from fascist doctrine. On July 5, 1931, Pius promulgated *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, condemning the deification of secular power in ideologies that glorified the state as the creator of all values and the embodiment of a people's collective conscience.

This condemnation was to be amplified six years later, after Nazi outrages against the Church. No sooner had Hitler's vice-chancellor, Franz Von Papen, done negotiating Germany's treaty with the Vatican in 1933 than Hitler embarked upon a new Kulturkampf. Catholic newspapers were quashed, Catholic political parties disbanded, Catholic functionaries sacked. Misfortune awaited young Catholics who did not join *Hitler Jugend* and Catholic workers who did not desert their guilds for the Nazi labor organization. Monastic orders came under siege as prosecutors taxed them with sexual deviance and currency smuggling. No one escaped defamation, not minor clergy, not even the pope, of whom it was rumored that he had one Jewish parent and secretly swore allegiance to freemasonry.

At length, in *Mit Brennender Sorge* (*With Deep Anxiety and Burning Indignation*), which parish priests throughout Germany read aloud on Palm Sunday 1937, Pius XI inveighed against Nazi neo-paganism. "Take care," he warned the priesthood, "that . . . faith in God, the first and irreplaceable foundation of religion, be preserved pure and unadulterate in Germany. Lacking faith are they who . . . identify God and the universe, who set store by some dubious conception of pre-Christian Teutons, and elevate a somber, impersonal destiny above the personal God, who make race or Folk or the state or the form of state or wielders of power . . . the object of an idolatrous cult. . . . Mind that such pernicious errors, which usually beget even more pernicious practices, do not take root among the faithful." After citing arrant violations of the Concordat, Pius remonstrated with those, including many clerics, who had succumbed to the siren song of German nationalism. A German national church, he said, was fundamentally repugnant. "The Church founded by the Redeemer is one and the same for all peoples and all nations. Beneath its cupola, which . . . spans the entire earth, there is a homeland for all peoples and all languages, there is room for the development of all particular qualities, for all advantages, for all the tasks and vocations granted by God the creator and savior to individuals and ethnic communities alike."

A "pernicious practice" that the pope did not explicitly condemn was Nazi Germany's victimization of Jews. Indeed, only once, when he dissolved a missionary society called "Friends of Israel," had Pius spoken out against anti-Semitism. Throughout his pontificate—which began four months before the assassination of Walther Rathenau, the Jewish foreign minister of the Weimar Republic, in 1922—this plague swept across Europe with ever greater virulence. But the Holy See remained silent, missing every opportunity to chastise the multitudes who required a scapegoat for the ills that beset them, while ignoring the few who petitioned it to speak out.

One such petition came from Edith Stein, formerly Edmund Husserl's assistant at Gottingen University. A Polish Jew by birth, Stein had converted to Catholicism, and during the 1920s she established herself in German Catholic circles as an important philosophical presence. Greatly admired for her work on Thomas Aquinas, she entertained serious hopes of being granted a private audience with Pius, when she requested one in 1933, to argue the case for a papal encyclical against anti-Semitism. That request went unanswered. Did the pope have her appeal in mind during the preparation of *Mit Brennender Sorge* four years later? If so, Stein—who by then had become a Carmelite nun at Cologne writing her magnum opus, *Finite and Eternal Being*, under the name Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross—would undoubtedly have considered it an inadequate response.

To be sure, the pope condemned encroachments by the "collectivity" on the individual's "God-given rights"; and he invoked a "human nature" transcending national boundaries. But nowhere in *Mit Brennender Sorge* is mention made of anti-Semitism or is opposition voiced to the Nuremberg laws that had deprived German Jews of their civil rights since 1935. Ambivalence also informs Pius's theological observations. The Old Testament, which Nazi officialdom proposed to ban, is defended as holy writ, but Jews are characterized as wayward souls chosen, despite themselves, to accomplish a divine mission. By the same inopportune logic, Christ is said to have received his "human nature" from a people "destined to crucify him."

When Pius XI finally took a firmer stand, what steeled him to it was the alliance that brought Berlin closer to Rome and put Nazism at the Vatican's doorstep. On May 2, 1938, Hitler arrived for week-long celebrations during which red banners with black swastikas fluttered along parade routes throughout the capital. (This violated a provision of the Concordat of 1929 that obliged Italy to respect Rome's "sacred character" and forced the pope to seek temporary asylum in his summer residence at Castel Gondolfo.) As soon as Hitler left the country, a group of Nazi experts quietly

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set up house in Milan to help Italian fascists draft the racial legislation that resulted, several months later, in mixed marriages being invalidated, in Jewish teachers being fired, in Jewish businesses being boarded shut, in all Jews who had acquired citizenship since 1919 receiving deportation orders.

This agenda was heralded by an intense propaganda campaign. On July 14, for example, a document titled *Dichiarazione della Razza*, or *Declaration of Race*, began to circulate under the auspices of the ministry of popular culture. Written by fascist university professors and supposedly vetted by Mussolini himself, it contained ten articles setting forth an official state mythology in which race was described as a purely biological concept and the Italian population as Aryan. Jews do not belong to "the Italian race," it asserted. "Jews represent the only people who never assimilated themselves in Italy because their non-European racial composition is absolutely different from that of Italians."

The pope censured this detestable creed on several occasions and had his pronouncements reported in *L'Osservatore romano*. As prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, he enjoined Catholic scholars, in a long letter published during Hitler's Roman visit, to discredit with scientific evidence the idea that there are inferior races further removed from the Aryan than from the ape, or that all of man's psychological and moral qualities ultimately reside in the blood. Then, after the *Declaration of Race* appeared, he lectured audiences on the universality of the Church, decrying the "separatism" propagated by fanatical nationalists. "Especially heinous," he warned young members of Catholic Action on July 21, "is this spirit of separatism, of rabid nationalism which, precisely because it is not Christian and not religious, ends up being inhuman."

Few people, even inside the Vatican, knew that these remarks were only preliminary salvos. On June 22, 1938, Pius summoned an American Jesuit named John La Farge, who was traveling through Europe for the Catholic weekly *America*, and straightway broached the issue of racism, about which La Farge had written a notably courageous book. Much to La Farge's astonishment, the aged pope charged him with the task of demonstrating *in extenso* the incompatibility of Catholicism and racist thinking. "Simply say what you would say if you yourself were pope," was how Pius phrased his request for a draft encyclical.

If humaneness and simple eloquence were the virtues that he sought above all else, Pius could not have chosen better than La Farge. Descended on his mother's side from Benjamin Franklin and on his father's from Breton nobility, La Farge was the youngest son of John La Farge, the artist and good friend of Henry James and Henry Adams. An alumnus of Harvard College, he studied for the priesthood at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, where he was ordained in July 1905. He then came home to enter the Society of Jesus. After a two-year novitiate, La Farge taught at several colleges and did graduate work in philosophy. Blessed with intellectual gifts of a high order (including a remarkable gift for languages: he eventually mastered nineteen all told, fourteen modern ones and five ancient), the young priest envisioned a scholarly career. But his cloistered life ended in 1909, when he briefly served as chaplain in the New York City prison system.

This sobering initiation prepared him for his next assignment, which was to do pastoral labor at Jesuit rural missions in southern Maryland. There he spent fifteen years with poor people, mostly black, and ministering to them transformed him. Much loved by his flock, he embraced, as very few people had yet done, the cause of civil rights, or what was then called interracial justice. In 1926 the Jesuits gave La Farge a very visible platform for his apostolate by making him associate editor of the weekly review *America*. He lectured regularly on race relations, turned out innumerable articles and in 1934 founded the first Catholic Interracial Council. Three years later he wrote a book called *Interracial Justice*, which convinced Pius XI to entrust him with the formulation of a universal message.

Feeling unequal to this momentous task, La Farge requested assistance from the general of his order, Father Wladimir Ledochowski, who named two collaborators with experience in drafting papal encyclicals, a Frenchman, Gustave Desbuquois, and a German, Gustav Gundlach. All three Jesuit priests shared a deep commitment to Catholic social action. Their affinity stood them in good stead during the very hot summer of 1938, which they spent huddled together every day, secretly toiling over *Humani Generis Unitas* in a Paris suburb. They began the draft of the papal letter in July. In late September, seven weeks before Kristallnacht, when Nazis burned down synagogues and Jewish homes all over Germany, La Farge brought a typescript to Ledochowski in Rome.

The instant *Humani Generis Unitas* left La Farge's hands, shadows gathered

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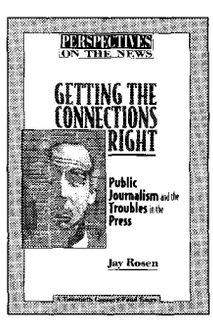
PUBLIC JOURNALISM AND THE TROUBLES IN THE PRESS

by Jay Rosen



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around it. Instead of transmitting the draft to Pius XI, Ledochowski had it scrutinized by Enrico Rosa, an elderly priest-cum-editor known for the anti-modernist principles that he had long defended at *La Civiltà cattolica*, the influential Jesuit review. Weeks passed, and while the pope grew ever weaker with heart disease, the encyclical lay across town in bureaucratic bondage. Especially galled was Gundlach, a man of high temper, who came to suspect that his superiors, above all Ledochowski, found *Humani Generis Unitas* inconvenient. "An outsider might well see in all this an attempt to sabotage by dilatoriness and for tactical and diplomatic reasons the mission entrusted to you by [the pope]," he told La Farge, safely back in America.

Why inconvenient? Because, in Gundlach's judgment, the encyclical against racism might alienate rich, powerful industrialists who applauded Nazi Germany's regimentation of workers. Ledochowski, he believed, was a hostage to wealth and, like too many other high-ranking ecclesiastics, he set store by the view that communism must be thwarted at all costs, even if it meant humoring Hitler and Mussolini. "Honor and success will redound to the Church only on the condition that it clearly defend Gospel and natural law everywhere and toward everyone. Today, while newspapers are reporting the fall of Czechoslovakia, it must be realized that this racial madness threatens the world as much as red communism." Exiled since May 1938, when he made himself persona non grata in greater Germany by denouncing the Austrian episcopate's loudly bugled enthusiasm for National Socialism, Gundlach, a veritable prisoner in the Vatican, had no public life to distract him from his vigil, or his helplessness. He dwelled obsessively on *Humani Generis Unitas*. It incensed him that the encyclical might never reach Pius XI, and on January 28, 1939, he complained to La Farge about the conspiracy of silence enveloping their work.

A fortnight later Pius XI died. Early in March, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli ascended the papal throne as Pius XII, whereupon Gundlach, who had known Pacelli for years, ceased to hope that categorical imperatives might prevail over the conduct of diplomacy. Soon afterward, the document was returned to its authors, with letters indicating that they might publish it if they so chose, but in their own names and after review by a censor. On May 10, Gundlach wrote to La Farge: "All I can do now is thank you once again for having offered me the opportunity to reflect deeply upon this problem and in this context.... As far as the draft goes, I generally agree with you that we should not make use of it for the time being. Right now there is only the slimmest chance that the high-ups will turn their attention to it, but they have a copy and your hope is not utterly groundless. Meanwhile, we shall abstain from any publication whatever."

FATHER JOHN LA FARGE, 1939

La Farge, Gundlach and Desbuquois observed that vow of silence throughout their lives, and the project that they had undertaken with such zeal remained largely unknown until 1972, when an American magazine, the *National Catholic Reporter*, brought its existence to light in articles that portray Pius XII as criminally meek. Like an aftershock of the quake produced ten years earlier by Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy*, this series unsettled the Catholic world. It was widely read; and it found a particularly close reader in Georges Passelecq, a Benedictine monk (and member of the wartime resistance) who served on the Belgian national commission for Jewish-Catholic relations.

Humani Generis Unitas being of vital interest to him, Passelecq contacted the Vatican Library, only to have Father Robert Graham, S.J., fend him off with three successive stories: that the library no longer possessed a copy; that there was a file on the encyclical in its secret archives, but not accessible "via the usual channels"; and that publishing too much about Jews might compromise Pope Paul VI at a time of conflict in the Middle East. Passelecq discontinued his inquiry. He might have abandoned it for good had he not, in 1986, met a Belgian Jewish historian named Bernard Suchecky, who was also intrigued by the document. They joined hands in a search that led them from one closed door to another, with diligently evasive custodians sending them hither and yon. After much fruitless correspondence, their determination was rewarded. A former Jesuit teaching at Florida International University, Thomas Breslin, who had come upon the French version of *Humani Generis Unitas* while cataloguing John La Farge's papers and had taken care to photograph it, furnished Passelecq and Suchecky with microfilm. It is this version that has now been published.

Almost 100 pages long, the draft encyclical begins with an argument based on the premise that "the instinct for acquisition," unrestrained in a world devoid of Spirit, breeds disunity. Parallels are repeatedly drawn between twentieth-century man and the vainglorious builders of the Tower of Babel.

Only halfway through the text does the racial question arise, and here La Farge and his co-authors discuss anti-Semitism at length. The persecution of Jews by advocates of racial purity is in every way reprehensible, they assert, but never more so than when it assumes the mantle of Christianity. How can a Christian suffer patriotic, law-abiding citizens to be divested of their civil rights?

> Once persecution has been unleashed, millions are stripped bare, on their native soil, of a citizen's basic rights and privileges. They are denied legal protection against violence and theft, they are insulted and shamed.... People who fought so valiantly for their country are called traitors; the

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children of those who fell on the field of battle become outlaws, merely by virtue of their parentage. The same patriotic values that are trumpeted in praise of one class of citizens count for nothing when invoked on behalf of poor wretches excluded from the community because of their race.

The flagrant violation of "elementary justice" had created a huge population of destitute exiles wandering from country to country, who ended up "a burden" both "to themselves and all humanity."

So far so good. But in a doctrinal argument reminiscent of *Mit Brennender Sorge*, these victimized Jews are seen to exemplify the fate of a people who have historically brought woe upon themselves by turning away from their redemptive vocation. Blind with dreams of "temporal conquest" and "material success," the Jews—except several "elite souls" among them—lost what they had once sought. The wonder is that they continue to exist at all. Scattered abroad, they evince an "indestructible coherence" for which "no natural explanation" can be found. Children of Providence, they are attended by Providence even in their wandering. "Saint Paul, addressing the Gentiles, clearly indicates the apparent contradiction between the unbelief of the Jewish people on the one hand, and, on the other, the providential role reserved for them in the economy of mankind's salvation," wrote La Farge, Gundlach and Desbuquois.

But he goes further still and emphasizes that the salvation of Israel is not a lost cause, that the Redemption, which was accomplished through the rejection and death of the Savior, extends its fruits not only to the Gentiles, but even to the very people who rejected him, provided they repent and recognize Christ as their Savior.

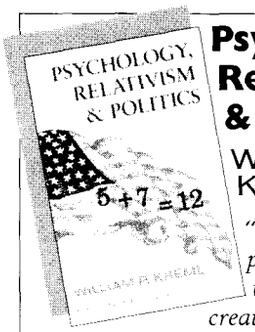
Do the three Jesuits share this optimism? Not quite. What Paul envisaged clearly on a "supernatural" plane is clouded by the dour experience of history. "Ever since they repudiated him, the Messiah's people have stood firm against Christianity. The result is perpetual tension between Jew and Christian. It has ever been thus, though clashes are now far more benign than hitherto."

Had they written nothing more, their censure of the Nuremburg laws would still speak louder than their parochial representation of Jews as metaphysical traitors scattered over the face of the earth for their sins. But they wrote more. They went on to write a passage titled "Reservations of the Church," in which the very anti-Semites whom they elsewhere rebuke are given aid and succor. Having voiced outrage that Jews should find themselves excluded from the community because of race, they proposed to quarantine them lest their profaneness infect good Christians. Race is not the issue, but soul *is* the issue, and Jews—as capitalists on the one hand and revolutionaries on the other—show a singular aptitude for engineering the impious derangements of modern society. "The high dignity that the Church has always recognized in the historic mission of the Jewish people, and its ardent prayers for their conversion, do not make it lose sight of the spiritual dangers to which contact with Jews can expose souls," they explain.

It is not unaware that it must guard the moral security of its children. And this obligation is certainly as urgent today as it has ever been. So long as the Jewish people persist in their unbelief and maintain their hostility to Christianity, the Church must exert itself by every means to avert the perils that this unbelief and hostility might create for the faith and mores of its flock. When, furthermore, the Church discovers that hatred of the Christian religion—whether or not such hatred be of Jewish origin—prompts wayward wretches to uphold and promote revolutionary movements bent on upsetting the social order and tearing souls away from the knowledge and love of God, its duty is to warn its children against these movements, to expose the ruses and lies of their leaders.

Eight years before the preparation of this document, Gundlach, in an article on anti-Semitism written for the *Lexikon Fur Theologie Und Kirche*, had defended anti-Semitism when it manifested itself as a force using "moral and legal means" against the "sinister influence" exerted by Jews throughout "the economy, politics, the theater, cinema, science, and art." Greatly to be feared, he insisted, were "liberal" Jews—some in the ranks of a "world-wide plutocracy," others in the camp of "international bolshevism"—who, being "moral nihilists" with neither religious nor national roots, might bring about the destruction of society. Survival demanded vigilance against the "somberness" characteristic of the Jewish soul. Did Gundlach (despite La Farge's misgivings, one suspects) shape the encyclical to this same view? Certainly the relevant passages of *Humani Generis Unitas*, though rather more temperate, echo his earlier language. "Jewish teachings" constitute a mortal threat, and that term is used ambiguously enough in *Humani* to include both religious belief and revolutionary doctrine.

Thus the story of the hidden encyclical ends on a sour note. One is left wondering whether those who kept it hidden



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were motivated not by the desire to protect Pius XII from further imputations of moral cowardice, but by the feeling that with such pleas in their behalf, Jews needed no prosecution. A Dutch Jesuit named Johannes Nota, who obtained excerpts of *Humani* years ago, may have put it best: "When one imagines these sentences made public in the context of the racist legislation prevailing in Germany at that time, one can only say today: Thank God this project remained a project!" •

The Occidental Tourist

BY NADER MOUSAVIZADEH

The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century by Robert D. Kaplan

(Random House, 476 pp., $27.50)

I.

Early in his ambitious new book, Robert Kaplan quotes a foreign service officer stationed in Sierra Leone: "Waking up each morning in a place that's on the verge of anarchy provides a unique insight into humanity. There are never any lulls." To which Kaplan can only add, "it is an experience that exposes one's liberal beliefs to the most severe challenges." Kaplan is not alone in his disillusionment, and yet his book is perhaps the most naked expression of the pessimism about the state of the world that informs much contemporary writing about this subject. It is a document of despair.

The Western triumphalism of the early post-cold war days—when it seemed to some, but not all, that the whole world was about to become like us—now seems a distant memory, and it has increasingly been replaced with a belief that democracy and the nation-state are in peril. It is argued that democracy may not be the ideal form of government for much of the world, and that the nation-state, as the standard of political organization, is obsolete as globalist and regionalist tendencies—weakening the state from above and from below—offer individuals and groups a deeper and more immediate sense of community.

But beneath much of this fatalism about the prospects for the non-Western world lies a disillusionment with politics itself, a belief that primordial forces are now the decisive forces, an impatience with the fitful modernizing processes that have brought about democratic capitalism in this part of the world. Increasingly, the complaints of autocratic Asian leaders about the unsuitability of democracy in their own autocracy are winning favorable attention. Demographic, environmental, even geographical factors are seen by Western analysts as all-important in every region of the globe (except their own). Robert Kaplan's new book is a primary document of this new analysis.

Kaplan's reputation as an interpreter of the new world was launched in 1993, with his book *Balkan Ghosts*, which appeared in the early days of the Bosnian war and quickly influenced much of the thinking about this issue. According to Elizabeth Drew in *On the Edge*, Kaplan's primordialist analysis played an important role in dissuading the Clinton administration from implementing its proposed "lift and strike" policy in the conflict; and in the intervening years, as atrocity after atrocity was inflicted on the Bosnian population, *Balkan Ghosts* won the kind of common recognition that is awarded simple theories with convenient conclusions. Though he states in the preface that he "heartily condemn[s]" the crimes committed by ethnic Serbs, Kaplan's conclusion was essentially that we were paralyzed before the archaic forces intractably at work in the damned Balkans. This was not a war of politics and power, in which modern thugs made cynical but effective use of local traditions; it was a war of memory, of revenge for ancient grievances, imagined or real. And so, even though the book only considers Bosnia briefly as part of a small chapter on Croatia, it served the Clinton administration with a "scholarly" pretext for inaction and willful impotence.

The historical, ethnic and religious determinism that infuses *The Ends of the Earth* was apparent in a remarkable sentence on the last page of *Balkan Ghosts*. Reminded of a line from Shakespeare—"So foul a sky clears not without a storm"—Kaplan writes: "Conflicting ethnic histories, inflamed by the living death of Communism, had made the Balkan sky so foul that now, sadly, a storm was required to clear it." Sad, wasn't it? And what, as Timothy Garton Ash has noted, can one do about a storm anyway? "Well, you can't stop a storm can you? Nor would you really want to, if it is 'required' to clear a foul sky."

If a storm was Kaplan's metaphor for the Balkan future, chaos became his prediction for Africa in an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1994. That article, "The Coming Anarchy," also gained the attention of the Clinton administration. Timothy Wirth, the undersecretary of state for global affairs, began to cite its predictions of "disintegrating societies and failed states" in his speeches and has called the new book "fascinating" and an "important warning." *The Ends of the Earth* is based on that dour article. It combines the impressionistic, anecdotal evidence of the travel writer with the growing body of historical and strategic analysis that is determined to make the passing from one century into another the moment at which the world as we now know it—the world of nation-states and civil society and centralized government—crumbles before the anarchy of demographic explosions and urban chaos.

II.

Kaplan begins his journey in West Africa, in Liberia, before traveling on to Sierra Leone, Togo, the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Then he proceeds to Egypt, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan and ends in Thailand and Cambodia by way of Central Asia. Capturing any of these places in the space of twenty or thirty pages is a daunting task, and so Kaplan focuses his sights on the underbelly or, as he eloquently puts it, the "shit," of these countries. He has certainly seen much, and some of what he reports about these societies is acute and incisive. And yet everywhere he goes he finds the same thing, which is the thing that he is looking for: that in all these wildly divergent countries the state is crumbling before the pressures of environmental degradation and population growth, giving way to pseudo-states understood better as congeries of groups and mafias, merchants and warlords whose fealty to any central government is non-existent.

How has Kaplan discovered this law of contemporary history? By eschewing the conventional paths of diplomatic and scholarly learning—political science

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is mentioned once, as "nonsense"—for a more existential kind of knowledge: seeing and feeling and breathing the fetid air of desperation that is engulfing these lands. Kaplan is pleased and quite confident about his manner of travel and the insights that it has brought him. Mocking Sterne, he grandly announces that "I would not be so naïve, I told myself. Mine would be an unsentimental journey." His goal "was to see humanity in each locale as literally an outgrowth of the terrain and climate in which it was fated to live" and "ignore what was legally and officially there." It does not occur to him that "humanity in each locale" is busy mastering, in different ways, the "climate in which it was fated to live." Instead, the "Wall Street fund manager" and the cloistered diplomat are trotted out as examples of pampered Westerners who are blind to Kaplan's vistas, and he evidently enjoys the compliment on his rough travels that he receives from a Ghanaian woman: "That's the only way to get to know Africa." Having enjoyed this stamp of approval, Kaplan nonetheless litters his book with implausible literary references to Gibbon, Bacon, Cavafy, Faulkner, Xenephon, Ptolemy and others.

Mindful of the pitfalls of his method, he assures the reader that "I am a time traveler, but not necessarily a romantic one.... Instead, I chart places where a literary tourist would rarely go." The problem lies elsewhere, in the burden that he must bear: "I wished I had been younger and more naïve, and that I was not addicted to political analysis." "Why couldn't I simply enjoy this earthly beauty?" he demurs at one point in Central Asia. "Why, even amidst such spectacular landscapes, did I hanker after answers?" It is hard, evidently, to know so much, to be so disabused.

Kaplan's book is a long argument for the triumph of experience over abstraction, of the seen over the thought. But he is so eager for recognition that he overstates his case even before he has had a chance to make it. He explains in the preface that *The Ends of the Earth* "is concrete to the extent that my ideas arise from personal experience." So far, so good—for a travel book. But soon after he insists that "[w]hile all ideas are subject to attack, one's personal experience—what one has actually seen and heard and felt in the course of a journey—is impregnable." Really? Has he forgotten that the twentieth century is filled with reports of "impregnable" personal experience in foreign countries that turned out to be spectacularly wrong? Conversely, it was hardly necessary to visit Bosnia or Rwanda in recent

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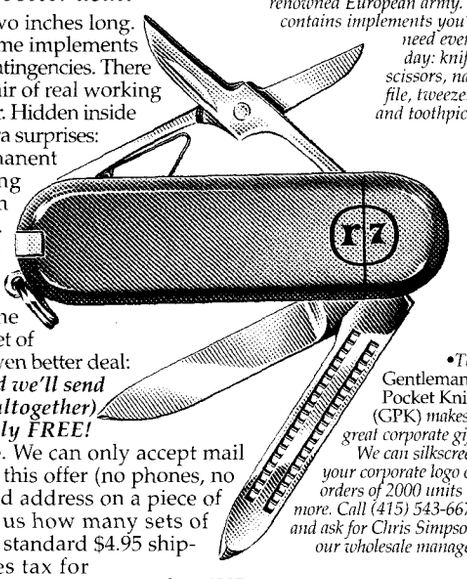

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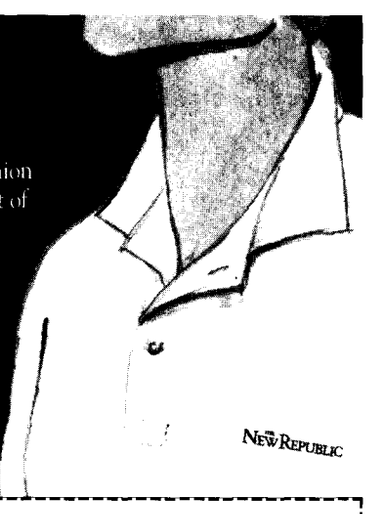

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years to grasp the horror of what was happening to those wretched places. And more generally, what is so "impregnable" about personal experience? Surely it must be subjected to analytical and scholarly pressures before its findings are accepted. Or can a country's history and society and culture really be understood in a brief visit, notepad at the ready?

Consider an example of Kaplan's method. Crossing the border from Turkey to Iran, and congratulating himself once again, he observes that "traveling in the Near East I could think more clearly about Africa. The problem with many area specialists is that they have no such means of comparison." By the time he arrives in Cambodia, however, he has decided that comparative studies have no merit at all: "How can there be such a thing as 'controlled case comparisons' when every single conflict around the world is different from every other one for a plethora of complex and accidental reasons.... A political scientist can do little more than what a journalist does: go to places ... and see if causal relationships exist."

Kaplan is right to argue that comparative studies that slight the diversity within the subject can become reductive; but it is absurd to suggest that this problem has not occurred to many scholars and analysts, who have complicated their work accordingly. And indeed it is Kaplan, not his dreaded "specialists," who falls into the traps: by attempting to fit all the stops on his tour into the jaded rubric of decaying, postmodern states, he ignores their extraordinary variety, in their pasts and in their futures; and by spending two or three weeks, sometimes a little more, in each country, he is himself unable to see the many parallels that may exist beyond the theory that he carries in his rucksack—parallels having to do with autocratic regimes, recent decolonization and underdeveloped civil societies.

III.

Kaplan is admirably eager to impart to his readers the immediacy and the relevance of these failing societies to the West. Starting out in Sierra Leone, he insists that Africa "must be confronted," that "Africa, alas, is the inescapable center." It is characteristic of the general tone of the book, however, that he makes such pronouncements and leaves them at that. The "inescapable center" of what, exactly? When he describes the rampant crime in Sierra Leone and warns that globally crime will become "the greatest danger of the next century," or when he wonders whether, given the problems it represents, Sierra Leone "was finally moving back toward the center of things," he is utterly unpersuasive.

We don't need to think that the ills of Sierra Leone are our own ills of tomorrow—they are not—in order to appreciate their gravity or our own role in alleviating them. Kaplan's own rather clumsy attempt at domesticating these faraway ailments makes this all too clear: "[I]f we don't care at all about such places, why should, for instance, suburbanites in Tucson care about the inner city in Philadelphia?" Nothing but race makes Kaplan's feeble analogy—black Africa, black inner city—even plausible. But the odiousness of the comparison aside, it is unlikely that the suburbanite already indifferent to the inner cities will be moved to care about Sierra Leone. Nor does he offer much reason to: "The message of Sierra Leone," he concludes, "was brutal: The end was nigh in the failed battle, fought valiantly by the liberal West, to equalize cultures around the world."

It was not cultures but democratic and economic structures that development aid was designed to equalize; but that is the least of Kaplan's difficulties. Kaplan generalizes extravagantly from the failures of Sierra Leone to conclude that development policies everywhere have been defeated. Such an extrapolation to other regions of the world is clearly unmerited. Worse, Kaplan ignores evidence of progress in the very neighborhood of his "inescapable center." As *The New York Times* has reported in recent weeks, Benin—a nearby African country that Kaplan overlooks—is in the midst of a boisterous experiment in a fair election in which real issues of economic and social policy have been at the top of the agenda. A discussion of such an event would have complicated Kaplan's account to the point of discrediting it. Like all futurists, after all, he is in the business of generalization. But it would have been much less exciting to report that state failure has occurred only in *some* countries.

Nor is complexity appreciated any more in the Middle East, to which Kaplan travels next. In Egypt, the "literary-minded traveler" decides that one of Marx's more outlandish and obviously Orientalist theories—"Oriental despotism"—remains the most useful description of that society. But incapable of engaging the idea intellectually, he simply accepts it without probing its merits in any depth, concluding that "Marx is about to be proven either very wrong or very right about the destiny of great riverine civilizations in the Near East and Asia." Well, which is it? His answer is that "Oriental despotism is a fascinating concept that, like many fascinating concepts, is seriously flawed." Thank you very much.

His visits to Egypt and to Turkey occasion also some of the ghastlier language and cruder explications of the book. "The gray and liver-brown building fronts were peeling like diseased skin"; a member of the Muslim Brotherhood "has a dark crescent-shaped mark on his forehead, from banging his forehead to the ground thousands of times throughout a life of prayer." (We've all noticed those banging marks on devout Muslims, haven't we?) The eyes of an Azeri Turk "gleam and devour, revealing the cunning of a bazaar merchant and the compassion of a relief worker." And yet it is all rather inscrutable: "It was impossible to determine from this tableau where civilization was headed.... All I knew was that for the moment it appeared physically ugly, like bad interior decorating."

This is not analysis. This is tourism—the tourist's naïveté, the tourist's recoil from the unsightliness of the Third World, the tourist's ignorance about the places in which he finds himself. "The cunning of a bazaar merchant": for such stereotypes it is not necessary to travel around the world. And the argument in these chapters is not much superior to the prose. In Turkey, Kaplan writes of the Muslim Welfare Party that won a plurality in the recent elections, and refers to it—reflexively, one suspects—as the "extremist Islamic 'Welfare' party." Whatever one thinks of this party's platform, or about the future of secularism in Turkey (where 80 percent of the electorate did in fact vote for secular parties), one cannot apply the term "extremist" to it. If anything, it may be the model for a kind of moderate Muslim politics that rejects extremism (for which there is little support in Turkey) and advocates only a greater religious presence in the secular Turkish system.

Kaplan misses the opportunity to think critically about Islam and secularism. In Egypt, his discussion of Islam is limited to a hoary cliché about its inherent "militancy," that it "is the one religion that is *prepared to fight!*"—whatever that means. And overcome with trite nostalgia for Cavafy's Alexandria, this is what Kaplan has to say about the flight to the cities in Egypt: "Of course, the Near East has long since ceased to be an exotic backdrop for literary-minded Westerners. An urbanized peasantry that has crowded into Egyptian cities has withdrawn into religion,

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unable to fathom the issues of overpopulation and resource scarcity confronted in the 1970s by the Western rationalist John Waterbury." This passage defies belief. The urbanized peasantry has hardly "withdrawn into religion"—they brought their faith with them to the cities and now cling to it as the one thing that is familiar in an alien environment. And does he really blame them for not "fathoming" the issues confronted by the "Western rationalist John Waterbury"?

Rationalism, for a start, has nothing to do with any of this. These people, largely illiterate and poor, can hardly be expected to read up on the latest WHO reports. And the opposition between a Princeton scholar's "rationalism" and uneducated peasant migrants' religiousness is invidious and absurd. Had they been Westerners, he seems to imply, these Muslims would have understood the pressures that they are adding to the environmental and demographic crises of their country. They would have thought ecologically and would have stayed in their villages. Maybe that's the answer. Keep them in the villages, but first send them to the Kennedy School.

From Turkey it is on to Iran, where he begins his portrait with perhaps the worst of his amateurish generalizations about national character. Told by a Pakistani friend that the "unforgiving" memories of Persians is what "makes even other Muslim Shi'ites afraid of the Iranians," Kaplan seizes on this "obsessive behavior" as a metaphor for all of Persian culture and Iranian history. (Memory in the Balkans. Anarchy in Africa. Obsession in Iran. One begins to get the picture.) He finds this behavior manifested in the scrupulousness with which Iranian students pasted together shredded documents in the American Embassy in the aftermath of the hostage crisis. It explains the high level of artisanship—which makes "[c]rossing into Iran from a neighboring country ... like going from a shop selling crude folk art to a Madison Avenue boutique."

And, if anyone is tempted to ignore this "obsessive" factor, Kaplan has a grim warning: "Neurotic this culture might be, even psychotic at times, but it was a culture that had to be taken seriously: a capable culture, which, if it turned its mind to, say, car bombs, would display the same meticulousness as in its craft items." From obsessiveness to neurosis, from neurosis to psychosis, from carpets to car bombs: it is all, in Kaplan's vulgar parochialism, a seamless whole, where a nation is defined by its criminals and its cataclysms.

IV.

Kaplan would have served himself, and his readers, a lot better by declining the burden of analysis; for he can tell a vivid story. Appearing to have spent more than a fortnight in Iran, he begins to show some real understanding, and the remaining chapters on Iran are the best of his travel-writing. There are interesting observations about the struggle between Persian tradition and Iranian Islamicism, and the nuances of a society reeling from a profound transformation are brought out in telling detail.

He learns (seemingly for the first time) of the antiquity and the richness of Persian culture, and its resistance to the Islamic influences brought by the Arab invasions of the seventh century. He discovers a civility and a communal sense of security even amid the bullying of the revolutionary militias. He observes acutely that the United States's great ally in the Arab Middle East, Saudi Arabia, is much more repressive toward women than Iran. And he reports vividly on the rise of a bazaar elite of small businessmen that is carving out a state within the state. It is a pity that he ends all this with essentialist crudities about whether government denials of terrorist assistance represent "what our culture considers lying and theirs merely haggling." But it is not a surprise.

Central Asia offers Kaplan more complexities of cultural conflicts, but here he seems to appreciate them. Visiting Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara, he shores up his grim view of the modern world by describing, in painstaking detail, the "unsightly" visage of the cities with their growing slums and decaying centers. He writes with careful attention about the relations between Uzbeks and Tajiks. He cites, interestingly, an observation by a regional specialist that Central Asia is an area where "national identities are multiple and polycentric" and, quoting another specialist, argues that "nationalities are being created retrospectively."

In a moment of humility, he even seems to recognize the limitations of his vocation: "All I had learned so far was that states in West Africa, the Near East, and Central Asia were weakening, and that ethnic-religious identities appeared stronger by contrast. Beyond that, I had little proof of anything." If only Kaplan had settled for this observation. But he is peddling prophecy, and so, in this chapter titled "Pre-Byzantine Turks and Civilizational Clashes," he wades into Samuel Huntington's territory and emerges more confused than enlightened.

To Huntington's notion (put forward a few years ago in *Foreign Affairs*) that a war of cultures will replace the war of states and ideologies that characterized the twentieth century, Kaplan adds his own notion about the weakening of national and state boundaries brought about by modern migrations. He is aware of the criticisms of Huntington's thesis and quotes Fouad Ajami on one region—the Caucasus—where civilizational faultlines are defied by *raison d'état*. Still, he insists, Huntington was not wrong about the principle of civilizational conflict, only about which civilizations are in conflict. The coming cataclysm is not based on a Christian-Muslim divide, it is based on a Turkic-Iranian one, the same one that pits Armenians against Azeris "not because the latter are Muslims, but because they are Turks." This is the sort of example that exposes the simplicity of Huntington's essay, and also the danger of a foreign policy idea that creates enemies where there are none and neglects allies whose state interests are in direct opposition to any supposed "civilizational" interests.

But even as he acknowledges the divisions and subdivisions of cultures and faiths, Kaplan repairs to his crudities. The Balkans "have been on the verge of culture conflict between Orthodox Christianity ... and the worldwide

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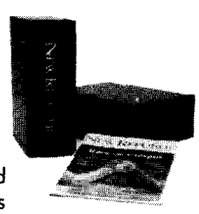

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House of Islam." And about the Gulf war he confidently asserts that "the West can still play one part of the House of Islam against another." But if the actual events of the Balkan war have taught us anything, it is that politics and power struggles of the most traditional—and universal—kind inflamed nationalist sentiments for the purposes of aggression; that animosities latent in almost any culture were transformed by terror and propaganda into useful hatreds whose only outlet was violence. And whatever one may think about the merits of the Gulf war, and the motivations of the United States, it was a conflict triggered by a trans-border aggression and the attempted obliteration of an internationally recognized state. One need not think that the West went to war for Kuwaiti democracy to insist that "playing one part of the House of Islam against another" had little to do with it. Indeed, it is a concession to Saddam Hussein's transparently cynical summons to a *Jihad* to indulge in "civilizational" explanations for the Gulf war.

Kaplan's remaining chapters on China, Pakistan and India read like the journal entries of a harried traveler, with each country awarded no more than a few days' scrutiny. But history is never far from his mind, and so the "cold" and "heartless" eyes of a soldier watching him vomit outside a bus in China remind him of the Cultural Revolution. "Soldiers like him had obviously observed far worse suffering. I imagined individually the one hundred million tragedies of the Great Cultural Revolution, when deaths, deportations, and family separations were carried out daily by Chinese troops and Red Guard units." Quite apart from the arrogant absurdity of "imagining individually" one hundred million tragedies, did it ever occur to Kaplan that the soldier, probably too young to even remember the Cultural Revolution, much less to have taken part in it, might simply have been disgusted at the sight of his vomit?

Traveling south to Pakistan, he meets a number of what he calls "hippie backbackers" and decides that their presence in the same lands that he is exploring makes them harbingers of the future, oracles of political change. "If—*if*—Siankiang was to be next, would this hippie presence be merely a coincidence, I wondered, or, like certain animals, did they sense a coming earthquake." When he encounters Pakistani buses along the mountain roads south to Islamabad, they appear to him as "all show, bravura, and superstition. Like the daredevil driving, they seemed products of a naïve culture." He has not even crossed the border into Pakistan when he proclaims its culture to be "naïve." But concentrated as he is on the underbelly of all these societies, Kaplan warns of Pakistan disintegrating socially and geographically to the point where it becomes indistinguishable from its fractured neighbor, Afghanistan.

After the disappearance of the British and Soviet empires that, to Kaplan, justified Afghanistan as a buffer state, he predicts that it will "evaporate" in the 1990s as Turkic, Tajik and Pashtun tribesmen divide the country between them. But he writes about the Afghan collapse into ethnic enclaves as if this were a process of natural disaster. There is no mention of the fundamentalist Islamic groups that have seized power, and there is no mention of the cold war rivalries that produced this disintegration. As Fred Halliday observed recently in these pages, the collapse of Afghanistan was a consequence of external rivalries played out by surrogate forces of the Soviet Union and the United States battling for power—a consequence, that is, of politics. But Kaplan is deaf to all of this. Political agency makes no sense in a scheme of ethnic and environmental determinism. This is not to say that the problems he discusses are not grave—that ethnic loyalties and inherited practices cannot impair political development—but it has not been conclusively demonstrated that they are eternal and insurmountable barriers to a civil, democratic society.

For Kaplan to claim that there is little evidence that "the state, as a governing ideal, can be successfully transported to areas outside the industrialized world" reflects not only an elemental confusion about the history of the state as opposed to the history of the nation (what Marx called "Oriental despotism" was most certainly a state). It is also a blatant case of taking dictators at their word. At one point he even quotes "the Nigerian generals" as understanding something about democracy that mysteriously has escaped the citizens of their country as well as the rest of the world: "[They] are betting that democracy is not the final word in political evolution. The West believes they are wrong. But what if they are right, or even partly right—in their cases?" He might better have addressed his question to the people suffering under the tyrannies that he is willing to accept in the name of "Asian values" and ancient practices.

Kaplan, however, has given up on these parts of the world; and where he doesn't predict anarchy, he proposes tyranny as the solution for the "ungovernables" of the world. Subtitled "The Way of the Future," the last section of *The Ends of the Earth* examines Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, with asides on the explosion of AIDS among the prostitutes in Thailand and the inexplicability of the Khmer's continuing war in Cambodia. And so he turns to Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's dictator, whose "nononsense business acumen," Kaplan believes, provides the kind of "neoauthoritarianism" (why neo?) that is needed not only in the Far East, but also, he avers, in Egypt. Kaplan praises Lee for forging "booming prosperity out of abject poverty," ignoring completely the exceptional political, economic and educational advantages that Singapore has enjoyed from colonial times. And even though Kaplan is aware of the dismal record of authoritarian rule in Indonesia and the Philippines, he insists that Lee, unlike Marcos and Suharto, succeeded because he was "authoritarian *and* honest."

Discussing Egypt earlier in the book, he predicts that, like Zia-ul-Haq and Lee Kwan Yew, its "new pharaohs" will have to "be harsh to dissidents, since democracy in Egypt, given its poverty and its despotic past, could lead to chaos." To prescribe authoritarianism for nations that have known nothing else throughout their histories is not only preposterous. It also ignores much of the best recent scholarship on democracy, liberty and development in the Third World. Amartya Sen has illuminated the strictly political roots of such seemingly natural crises as famine and explained the role that democracy can play in preventing and solving them; and Jagdish Bhagwati has provided persuasive evidence for the correlation between democracy and development, exposing the degree to which the Far Eastern despotic "miracles" that Kaplan is so enamored of have built their prosperity on unique circumstances of education and land reform.

What these scholars are saying is that the sociopolitical developments that lie at the root of democracy and capitalism in the West are conceivable in other parts of the world, if the challenges are properly understood. This is not a radical message. The task for local leaders (and Western analysts) is to see through the rhetoric of "Asian values" and particularist premises, and to concentrate on bringing about the conditions for freedom and prosperity that remain the wish of the vast majority of people everywhere.

In the end, Kaplan's many journeys seem only to have separated him, morally and intellectually, from those whom he visited—and from his own world, too, which believes in reason, freedom, individual effort, rights, progress—in a word,

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in universalism. He is unaware of his distance from the universalist ideal and thinks, in fact, that he is himself a universalist: "[I] am sure of one thing: that even as some nations, including the United States, may be retreating into a fortress-like nationalism, this is only a temporary stage before the world tide of population and poverty forces us all to realize that we inhabit one increasingly small and crowded earth." But nationalism is not "a temporary stage," and the explosion of the world's population, like the failure of nation-states, is also not a natural disaster. It is a human disaster, which has been managed or averted in some places and can be managed or averted in other places. What will matter is whether we understand these failures and conflicts, realize that they are amenable to political agency and accept the obligation that this realization places on us. •

The Consequences of Pragmatism

By James Goodman

Fulbright: A Biography by Randall Bennett Woods

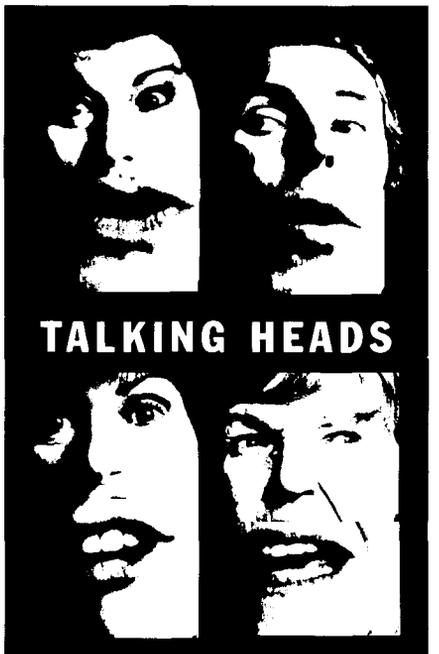
(Cambridge University Press, 733 pp., $29.95)

If the authors of the sequel to *Profiles in Courage* stick to the original formula—"men who made the Senate something more than a gathering of time servers skilled only in predicting and following the tides of public sentiment"—they are likely to give serious thought to the case of J. William Fulbright, who died last February at the age of 89. Fulbright spent thirty-two years in Congress, sixteen of them as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and in that time he repeatedly demonstrated that he was no simple slave to party or constituents, taking stands that friends feared (and enemies hoped) would cost him reputation and power and perhaps even his seat.

In April 1943, the freshman congressman surprised ranking members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and then infuriated their counterparts in the Senate, when he led the White House, the House of Representatives, and finally the Senate, to the Fulbright-Connally Resolution, which called for the creation of the United Nations. In 1946, Fulbright accused Harry Truman of undermining international collective security by bullying the Soviet Union. Fulbright stood up to Joseph McCarthy early and often; in 1954 he was the lone senator to vote to kill McCarthy's committee by cutting off its funds. In the wake of the Suez crisis of 1956, Fulbright blasted the Eisenhower administration for confusing Egyptian nationalism with communism, thereby exacerbating the cold war and conflict in the Middle East. In 1965, he broke with the popular president of his own party over the invasion of the Dominican Republic and then over the war in Vietnam.

Fortunately for Fulbright, courage does not require consistency over the course of a long career. At times he talked of the Soviet Union as if it were simply a healthy competitor, and let the best economic system win; at other times, as if it were a dire military and political threat. In 1947, Fulbright supported Truman's plan for aid to undemocratic, anticommunist regimes in Greece and Turkey; and before long he began to question the idea that we could foster freedom and democracy by helping tyrants suppress nationalist movements or justifiable social rebellions. In the 1950s, Fulbright opposed congressional efforts to wrest control of foreign policy from Eisenhower; in the 1960s and 1970s he supported efforts to wrest it from Johnson and Nixon. In 1961 he argued forcefully against the Bay of Pigs invasion; in 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis, he urged surgical air strikes or an invasion. A blockade, he told a surprised Kennedy, wouldn't do.

It was the very unlikelihood of Fulbright's break with his friend Lyndon Johnson that made his opposition to the Vietnam War so consequential. Fulbright looked like a cold warrior and dressed like a cold warrior, and despite his disdain for McCarthy, his credentials in the cold war establishment were impeccable. He had supported Eisenhower and Kennedy in Vietnam; and in 1964 he pushed Johnson's Gulf of Tonkin Resolution through the Senate in a day. So when, in press conferences and the televised hearings that became national teach-ins on the war, Fulbright began to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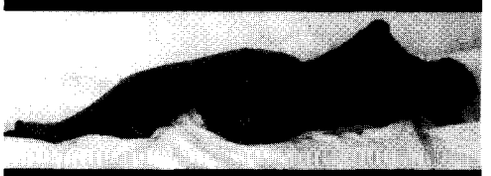

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suggest that Johnson was wrong and perhaps even lying about the nature of the conflict, the legitimacy of South Vietnam's government, the threat to American interests posed by the "loss" of Vietnam, and the possibility of dramatic escalation and a long war, he made opposition safe for moderates and eventually for some conservatives.

Randall Woods wisely resists the temptation to make the crooked lines straight. When the archives or Woods's interviews provide a plausible explanation for some curious position or sudden change in direction, Woods explains. Otherwise, he yields to the facts and the idiosyncrasies of Fulbright's experience, thought, character, line of work and tumultuous times. The man who emerges from Woods's biography—which, like Fulbright's career, is long but never dull—was a passionate pragmatist who loved talk and debate and held fast to a vision of a world in which talk would lead to understanding, understanding to cooperation, and cooperation to peace. His only true enemies were the "zealots" and "true believers" whom he himself could not understand, the "moral absolutists" of left and right who saw politics and international relations in terms of good and evil, thereby blocking rational deliberation and problem-solving.

Fulbright was born in 1905 and raised in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in a big house that overlooked the state university and the town square. His father, Jay, a banker, made a killing in the 1890s buying huge tracts of land and failing businesses at panic prices. "Banking in the unregulated climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," Woods writes, "included taking advantage of other people's calamities." His mother, Roberta, had a teaching degree and loved journalism, but gave up the thought of working outside the home for marriage and many children. Then, in 1923, Jay suddenly died, and it fell to Roberta to save the family's business empire from Jay's enemies, who jumped at the opportunity to take advantage of her calamity.

The young Fulbright went to a progressive school run by the University of Arkansas and then on to the university, where he was a star athlete and a "B" student when "C"s were truly average. He was rewarded with a Rhodes Scholarship. He found Oxford intimidating—"I can't help but feel like a bonehead over here and of course I am"—but also exhilarating. He worked hard and reveled in the lectures, theater, literary societies, sports and vacation travel across Europe. He found a lifelong mentor and friend in his first tutor, Ronald McCallum, a young political scientist and liberal internationalist. Fulbright tired of the debunking that endlessly engaged his dons, but he learned to do it and plainly liked the idea that even a "bonehead" Rhodes was among the chosen.

Back home, Fulbright fell in love, attended George Washington University Law School, married, worked for the Justice Department and taught law. He lectured his students, as his mother lectured him, about the importance of the best men going into public service, but there is no evidence that the newlywed and new father had any notable ambition of his own. It was his mother who, after securing the family's fortune, practiced what she preached, throwing herself into politics, which in 1930s Arkansas was a cross between organized crime (bootlegging, stolen cars and racketeering) and ordinary business—except that the politicians lacked the moral scruples of the average businessman and weren't taking any financial risks. Seventy percent of the electorate was disfranchised by the poll tax, and tremendous power lay in the hands of the judges and sheriffs who determined who was eligible to vote, collected the tax and put eligible voters on juries.

An ardent supporter of FDR, Roberta Fulbright didn't see why Arkansas shouldn't have a new deal, too. She put money and the *Northwest Arkansas Times* (the family newspaper, for which she wrote a regular column) behind the Good Government League—an amalgam of reform-minded citizens, Republicans, recently defeated Democrats and businessmen without government contracts. In 1938, Roberta helped Carl Bailey win a second term as governor. In 1939, the president of the University of Arkansas died and Bailey named Roberta's son Bill, a 34-year-old law professor without any relevant experience, to replace him.

The faculty was dismayed, but Fulbright won over many detractors with strong speeches about the value of a liberal arts education, the danger of anti-intellectualism in America, and the need for Arkansas to overcome what Woods calls its "deep-seated inferiority complex." "We have many things to be proud of in Arkansas," Fulbright said, "and we must cultivate that pride just as they have in Texas and California." But he didn't have time to do much more than talk, for in 1940 Carl Bailey was defeated and Fulbright was out of a job.

His mother and her political allies urged him to run for Congress, and despite his initial reluctance he shook the hands of every voter in the district and won by a wide margin. Two years later, with his national reputation already making Arkansans proud, Fulbright ran for the Senate, broadening his base with an appeal to university alumni statewide, a large block of Arkansas's professionals and voters. Fulbright's opponent accused him of being an elitist Anglophile as well as a communist-, labor- and "nigger-loving" New Dealer. Fulbright denied every charge, except that he was pro-British.

In the Senate, as in the House, Fulbright wanted to focus on national issues, but he knew that he would still have to "do local things for local people." He was a loyal friend of business and industry at the expense of Arkansas's wretchedly unorganized labor. He kept the independent farmers happy all the time; and when he couldn't do that without alienating planters and agribusiness, he counted on class solidarity to bring the "Bourbons" in line. Most consequentially, he obstructed the civil rights movement at every turn.

In 1943, he voted against legislation that would have outlawed the poll tax. The poll tax, he said, was "clearly not a matter for federal action." In 1946 he joined the filibuster that killed the Fair Employment Practices Committee. "Do you think," he asked, "that you can make people hire those whom they regard as unfit for any reason?" Fulbright responded to Truman's bold proposals to end lynching, the poll tax, discrimination in employment and segregation by proposing a compromise: "Southern support for anti-poll tax and antilynching legislation in return for northern acquiescence in segregation and discrimination in hiring." Then he joined the filibuster that killed the legislation. Fulbright signed the Southern Manifesto against *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and uttered not a word of protest when, during the Little Rock crisis, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus "set the cause of peaceful integration in the South back a decade." If it is sometimes possible for Woods to portray Fulbright as a racial moderate, it is only because Fulbright's allies—Bilbo, Eastland, Russell, Thurmond—tipped the scales beyond all reasonable measure.

By 1950, Fulbright's support for international cooperation, foreign aid and educational exchange had for many made his name synonymous with American idealism, generosity and democracy. (A Greek friend of mine, for whom Fulbright money meant enrollment at an American-sponsored prep school in Athens and the opportunity to escape "the muck of the Middle East in the 1950s," remembers that he and his schoolmates thought it truly remarkable

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that Americans gave money to people simply because they were "fully bright.") So it is not surprising that Fulbright's opposition to civil rights brought letters of incredulity and dismay from all over the world. How could Fulbright fight Truman on civil rights the very year, 1948, that the first Fulbright scholars went abroad to promote intercultural understanding and peace? How could a man of his "caliber, education, and reason" join the "bigots" and "racists" resisting the court-ordered integration of the schools? How, one of Fulbright's sisters asked in 1957, could he remain silent, "when silence means consent," while Governor Faubus encouraged "lawlessness, violence, and hatred" and countless Southern moderates went without a leader?

Fulbright insisted that his fight for state's rights at home, even his defense of segregation, was perfectly consistent with his fight for self-determination abroad. Later he would say that he opposed cultural imperialism in Arkansas no less than in Southeast Asia (somehow failing to notice that in their struggle for "self-determination" and equality at home, black Arkansans welcomed the aid of the "imperialist" federal government). Prejudice and segregation were the burdens of Southern history, and neither legislation, court rulings nor executive action could eliminate them. Change would come only after individual communities decided to educate Negroes and provide them with jobs.

Woods describes Fulbright's racism as "a combination of the blindness of the southern highlander who had not experienced black life and culture, and the noblesse oblige of the planting aristocracy." Fulbright believed black people were inferior, and though he wasn't talking about himself when he said that "people in eastern Arkansas . . . couldn't see their daughter going to school with a black—they always imagined the black would rape their daughter," there is no evidence in this book that he had a markedly different view. There is evidence, however, that his explanation for his views began to change as time passed and as massive resisters began to remind him of Nazis, as white terror against black Southerners finally began to make the news, and as Fulbright's internationalism made him the darling of liberals nationwide—even if his votes against one civil rights act after another did not change. He spoke mostly of political necessity: "There's no mystery why the people from Georgia, Mississippi, and so on have been what they call bigots," he said in 1988. "They inherited an historical situation. You couldn't be elected if you didn't have that view."

Lyndon Johnson and his aides put their own spin on Fulbright's claim that his views on race and foreign relations were consistent. They charged that the racist Anglophile didn't believe the Vietnamese were suited for democracy or worth spilling blood for. There was ample precedent for that kind of thinking in the opposition of some Americans to Manifest Destiny and turn-of-the-century imperialism, and Fulbright himself had explained his lack of enthusiasm for American involvement in Korea by arguing that America could live with the "communization" of Asia: "Our basic institutions . . . our religious system, and most of the ancestry of the people of the United States derive from Europe, not from the Far East.... The people of Europe understand our system of society much better than do the people of the Far East." Woods, uncharacteristically, does not address Johnson's charge. He may think that it is enough to show that Johnson was furious at Fulbright and vindictive. He was. But that doesn't necessarily mean that he was wrong.

There was only one issue on which Fulbright was as unwavering over the course of his long career as he was unwavering on civil rights, and that was the Middle East, where he was an outspoken critic of American policy. American friends of Israel (including many

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civil rights activists and sympathizers who presumed that Southern racists were anti-Semites, too) charged that Fulbright was anti-Semitic. They pointed to his criticism of America's unconditional support for Israel, his close ties to Arab leaders, his proposals for a Palestinian state, his warnings about the undue influence of Israel and American Zionists in Congress and finally to his raving, after he lost his Senate seat to Dale Bumpers in 1974, about a Zionist conspiracy. There was a great outcry on the second day of the Yom Kippur war, when Fulbright was asked if he thought the United States and the Soviet Union should simply stop supplying arms to their "client states" in the Middle East. "Yes," he said, but it would never happen, "because the Israelis control the policy in the Congress and the Senate."

Woods deeply admires Fulbright, but if his treatment of Fulbright's civil rights record is any indication, he does not seem particularly interested in covering up his dark side. Woods's penchant for paraphrase about matters that cry out for direct quotation left me wondering if he left the most incriminating evidence of anti-Semitism (and racism) in the archives; and yet the evidence in his book reveals no pronounced prejudice against Jews as Jews. Against those who have charged that anti-Semitism was at the root of Fulbright's views about the Middle East, Woods persuasively argues that Fulbright's consistent opposition to our policies (and to Israel's) was based on his conviction that they prolonged conflict in the region, forestalled détente with the Soviet Union and endangered world peace.

From the Suez Crisis on, Fulbright criticized what he called our one-sided approach to the conflict. In the 1960s, he began to ask why we were giving more aid to Israel than to all of its Arab neighbors combined. In 1970, he proposed a treaty between the United States and Israel, effective only after the U.N. Security Council endorsed it, under which Israel would withdraw from the occupied territories in exchange for international recognition and protection of its pre-1967 borders. During the 1973 war, Fulbright called for an imposed peace based on United Nations Resolution 242.

Fulbright's criticism of the Israeli lobby was the frustration of a powerful politician and fierce competitor who, when it came to the Middle East, always got beat. Fulbright's claim that Zionists were responsible for his defeat in 1974 was as contemptible as it was absurd. Once out of office, he undermined whatever credibility he had as an independent observer of the Middle East by signing on as a lobbyist for various Arab governments and causes. The man who established a great academic exchange program so that students and scholars could come to understand the perspectives of people in other lands made no effort to understand the perspective of the people of one particular land. Fulbright thought it was enough to say that his plans for peace were in Israel's best interest and then to express exasperation when Israel's friends didn't understand.

Israel was not the only country in the region with a claim for empathy and understanding, but Woods's biography makes clear that Fulbright was not particularly moved by the plight of any Arab nation or even the Palestinians. And in this way, his opposition to American policy in the Middle East was akin to his opposition to American policy in Vietnam. Unlike many of his liberal allies and admirers, it was not his conscience or concern for the Vietnamese that turned him against the war. His first concern was for us, what we were doing to ourselves: fighting a war we couldn't win; squandering resources; increasing the power of the military industrial complex; and undermining our image in the eyes of the world. Fulbright's views of foreign affairs were rooted in his sense of American self-interest, whether it be avoiding Armageddon or keeping down the price of oil. And in the Middle East, once Fulbright rejected the "cold war" argument that Israel was the last bastion of anti-communism, or the moral argument that democracies ought to stand up for other democracies, it was easy for him to conclude that we should not allow our "vanity," our sentimental attachment to Israel, to jeopardize our primary interests, energy and détente.

Seen From Faraway

Like looking through binoculars
there is that strange equation of sight and distance
when you notice the angel riding a bicycle through the snowy
streets. On the hem of his garment are a few stains
from his parents' love-making. Nothing flashy—just a faint
discoloring of white fabric which by the time he reaches
the brick school will look just like the after-mark
of melting snow. He has a couple of candles
for his mother stashed in a pants pocket
which makes the riding more difficult.
He thinks of the leg motion
the way one thinks of opposites—remembers health when ill,
longs for summer during winter. He is careful
not to let the dress tangle in the bicycle gears.
He is always conscious that life is a story . . .

Often, the narrator is an imaginary sports announcer—
prone to fits of generosity. The day is just the double-edged
horizon with sleep on either line in the distance.
He thinks of the phrase, *let something happen*

and it means something different than it used to.
He used to think of a particular girl who served food
in the cafeteria letting something happen—
a long line of buttons
tracing her backbone, a winter moon shimmering above
a hill and in the dream he can't decipher snow drifts
silently into his mouth, and bells from a distant mosque
tangle in her hair.
The fantasy was about her recognizing him.
He wanted to be noticed, singled out from the hundreds
of boys seated at the long tables under the high windows
under the enormous ceiling in the bright gash of light
and noon-time rough-housing.
He used to anticipate her
walking back and forth stacking the trays,
replacing napkins near his table.

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Fulbright had courage and sometimes it cost him. He was John Kennedy's leading candidate for Secretary of State until Jewish groups (along with the NAACP and UAW) objected; he was frozen out of social and official functions at Johnson's White House; for a decade he was reviled as a traitor, a friend of the communists killing American boys. Yet so long as he did "local things for local people" (fought for oil and gas depletion allowances and agricultural price supports; fought against the minimum wage) and stayed abreast of his challengers on race, Fulbright's foreign policy principles did not cost him much. His seat was his for thirty years, and when he lost it to Dale Bumpers in 1974 his views on Vietnam and Israel were nowhere near as decisive as the governor's popularity and voters' sense that, at 68, their world-famous senator had lost interest in Arkansas.

Fulbright's is a story of cowardice as well as courage, and it is the relationship between the two that makes it most disturbing. Consider the occasion of one of Fulbright's most important Senate speeches. On March 25, 1964, he asked his colleagues and all Americans to cast aside the "old myths" of a monolithic communist world (bent on burying the free world), of the domino theory and of containment. He urged an embrace of the "new realities" of each communist country's history, politics, particular social problems and aspirations. He spoke about the Soviet Union, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Cuba, Latin America, China and Vietnam. He spoke for hours. The speech was his first contribution to the eighty-three-day filibuster against the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

JAMES GOODMAN, who teaches history and social studies at Harvard University, is the author of *Stories of Scottsboro* (Vintage).

She wore a white uniform, apron, hair net which contained
the massive coil of dark hair brushed up
revealing the nape of neck as she looked down, concentrating...
spoons, forks, knives.
An angel attracting no attention—
a boy on a way to a theater. A boy with wings—
    appearing as unlikely
as the type that actually work, lift—
riding a rusted ten-speed through the slush
of the ancient, darkened city
pushed by the palm of wind.

Just as sunlight will always name each tree
he knows not much will ever change—
soldiers are still
taking families out into the hush of forest,
positioning groups in front of trenches as if
it were a photo
they were after.
It is like looking through the wrong end
of a telescope—seeing the soldiers
positioning people in front of trenches
in the silence of a drawn breath.

Even at this great distance you are able to
count silently all the trees—there are hundreds.
I wonder how many shovels it takes?
Look at the wool coats, the black freckles' random design
splattered across the white birch bark,
the length of shadow falling off
the many trees digging the distance.
The shadows there weigh as much as pianos.
No music, no voice,
it is the same ancient moon pearled, flushed
rising out of the heights of bare knuckled branches,
that illuminates the cool, turned cheek of a soldier,
turning.

KAREN FISH

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GUATEMALA DIARIST

Hackers

I AM NOT USUALLY PARANOID, AND I have never been a skittish traveler. It was not my idea to call the State Department's travel advisory line before my trip to Guatemala. But my mother mentioned an ulcer, so I dutifully complied. The message lasts about half an hour. "Warning," it begins, "possible dangers . . . " Not wanting to ruin my vacation, I tuned out then hung up after ten minutes. Later that night, the only words I could remember were " . . . machete . . . machete . . . machete." So the next day I called back for details. This was clearly a mistake, since when I actually listened, I realized some sadistic State Department flunky who probably hadn't had a vacation in three years had set out to ruin mine. Travel in Guatemala is basically safe, she promised. Yes, guerrillas sometimes detonate explosives at major shopping centers, but there have been "relatively few deaths." No American tourists have been kidnapped. Only American *residents*. And, oh yes, some Germans. Armed robberies, machete attacks, rapes, carjackings—all on the rise. A Swedish tourist hacked up by machete-wielding bandits. An American shot resisting arrest. Hospitals on the verge of bankruptcy. And let's not forget the riots, ignited by unfounded rumors of foreigners stealing Guatemalan children.

WHEN MY FRIEND AND I ARRIVED IN Guatemala City, our sweet and protective hosts unwittingly nurtured our state of high anxiety, promptly whisking us away to their house in a nearby suburb so we wouldn't have to "risk a taxi." Each house on their block was identical, white and ranch-style, fortressed by a two-car garage and a metal gate. The street was silent, except when the restless attack dogs who prowled the roofs picked up our scent and began their symphony of mad barking. At night, we were driven through downtown alleys and sat passively staring at transvestite prostitutes and street kids through the prison of a Honda Accord on our way to the local version of TGI Friday's. And when we traveled north to the Mayan ruins of Tikal, our hosts insisted we stay at the Hotel Camino Real, a Mayan Fantasy Island where a Tattoo look-alike arrived in a golf cart to pick up our bags and indoor fountains spewed fruit juice. So imagine our surprise as there we were, on our first morning of unchaperoned freedom, basking in the heat atop a six-story pyramid, when the sun was suddenly blotted out. We looked up and saw a man, 40ish, a tooth missing from what at the time seemed a prophetic grin, and swinging at his side a three-foot-long machete. "Machete," said my friend through gripped teeth. "Machete," I stupidly repeated and felt my shirt grow damp. We grabbed our bags, smiled nervously and flew down the steps. It was only later we learned that, in Guatemala, machetes are also used as all-purpose gardening tools.

OUR HOSTS' OVERPROtectiveness did, however, reveal something: the North American press has missed the real story in Guatemala. Nostalgic for CIA intrigue, reporters fixate on guerrilla-army battles and miss the country's deeper fissures. Our hosts were typical middle-class Guatemalans, both doctors and both liberal. They volunteered at community clinics and called Mayans by their p.c. name—*las indigenas*. But they saw little difference between rebel and army leaders, even buying the implausible rumor that many rebel leaders kept villas in Switzerland. As they saw it, the real enemy camps are the carjackers and the carjacked, the robbers and the robbed. One of the fastest-growing companies in Guatemala is Gallit, an Israeli security firm with mythic powers. The country's new president, Alvaro Arzu Irigoyen, tapped into their fears; he won the election with the boring campaign slogan "Arzu Means Security."

THE IMPOVERISHED MAYANS, WHO make up about 90 percent of the population, don't have much to steal. For them, the deepest divide runs between Christians and heathens. Only North Americans were surprised when the indigenous Mayans voted en masse this January for Arzu's opponent, the army's man, the one from whom the guerrillas were supposed to protect them. They supported him mainly because he was endorsed by their real hero, Efrain Rios Montt, a general who temporarily left the army to become God's soldier. Converted by a millennial sect of ex-hippies from Eureka, California, Rios Montt wooed the Mayans with his moving Sunday sermons. Sure, he condoned his share of brutality. But his worshipers overlooked the details; the blood was a small price to pay to make Guatemala the New Jerusalem. One night, standing in a valley near Lake Atitlan, we heard the depths of their passion. From a church in the highlands we couldn't see came the call and response of revival, a sound like hundreds of faithful howling to the moon, echoing through the mountains.

THIS YEAR RIOS MONTT LOST, BUT his flock seems to be prospering. For the first time, indigenous Mayans trounced their light-skinned opponents in local elections. In a stunning political shift, they won control of forty major cities, including the country's second-largest. Local pundits were shocked, but the prophesy might have been read in smaller changes. A country's future, the Arab Israeli Anton Shammas once wrote, is revealed in its kitsch. In his essay "Kitsch 22," Shammas read how deeply the occupiers' culture had seeped into the Arab psyche by the hierarchy of the pictures displayed in people's homes. Once, pictures of ancestors were hung high on bare walls, in an expression of reverence and awe. But exposure to another culture had "lowered the picture level of the Arab wall by at least a meter"—a dire trend.

IN GUATEMALA, KITSCH SEEMS TO serve the opposite purpose. The Mayans use it to regain a sense of control, by fashioning new objects from materials the conquerors left behind. The Spanish invaders built Gothic-sized churches meant to overwhelm, but the locals stroll through them undaunted. They bypass the main altar and saunter up to their favorite saint, usually a waxen figure painted in theatrical hues and draped in the neon colors of local garb. Scrapping sacerdotal formality, they climb up to the statue, hugging and stroking it as if it were a long-lost uncle. We saw the best of these saints in a lake town called Santiago Atitlan. As we left the cavernous and empty local church, a group of ragged boys crowded around us hissing "Maximon, Maximon." I checked the guidebook and found that Maximon was a local deity, a blend of Christian and Mayan gods who balanced within him both good and evil. We followed the boys through back alleys to a dirt-floored shack, indistinguishable from the rest. Inside was a candle-lit altar, at the center of which sat a dwarfish, wooden Marlboro man, cigar in one hand, beer in the other. He was dressed in jeans and a cowboy hat, a bandana draped over his right eye. Before him several people knelt in prayer, taking care not to lean on the beer bottles. I stared in amazement, wondering what they might be thinking. But my reverie was interrupted by the kids, reminding me the kitsch was theirs, and I owed them for it. "Money," they said. "Where is money?"

HANNA ROSIN

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Passing on Failure

"How is it that some students enter high school—and even go on to graduate—without being able to read or do simple math?" John Cole, president of the Texas Federation of Teachers, says he is often asked that question, and he doesn't have any trouble with the answer. It happens because the students have been passed from grade to grade without being able to do the required work.

Social promotion, as this practice is known, is less popular than it used to be. It is even against the law in some places. Nevertheless, polls of teachers show that social promotion is alive and well in schools across the country. For example, according to a recent survey of Texas teachers,

- 68 percent of elementary school teachers had students who were promoted to the next grade level even though they had failed the class.
- 61 percent of middle school and junior high teachers had students who failed the course and were allowed to move on without repeating it.
- 40 percent said that a student they had recommended for retention was promoted.
- 78 percent *disagreed* with the statement that students in their school are not promoted unless they have earned the necessary passing grades.

Social promotion is alive and well in schools across the country.

These figures are stark, but other surveys, both national and state, tell a similar story of promoting students who are unprepared.

Supporters of social promotion justify it by talking about the stigma attached to being "kept back." They say that students who do not go on with their peers from grade to grade suffer a disastrous blow to their self-esteem and are likely to drop out of high school. Indeed, many people who went to school in the days before social promotion became standard practice remember the hulking 14-year-old who sat in the back of their sixth-grade class. Did being kept back do him any good? (And if he was a discipline problem, as was often the case, how did having him repeat the grade affect the learning of other students in the class?)

Recently, an economic argument for social promotion has also been put forward. It is very expensive to fail students and thus add a year, or more, onto their schooling. Undoubtedly this accounts in part for the willingness of some administrators to promote students whom teachers have tried to fail.

But if we are talking about the costs of retention to the students themselves and to society, we should also look at the costs of promoting students who have not met the minimum standards that most schools require. How hard are students likely to work when they learn, from the earliest grades, that they will pass no matter how little they do? What kind of preparation are they getting for real life, where bosses seldom reward substandard performance with promotion? And what about the cost to classmates who might be inclined to work if they didn't see that meeting the standards for promotion was unnecessary?

The harm of social promotion is compounded for children who make a slow start in school. If we promote elementary school students who have not learned to read, saying they will "catch up," they are likely to fall more and more behind until, by the time they reach middle school, catching up is nearly impossible. Will they feel good about themselves when they sit in class, as sophomores or juniors, unable to follow what is going on? If they hang around long enough to get a high school diploma, have they any hope of getting a permanent job that pays a decent wage? We are not doing these students a favor by passing them, even if they have not learned the work; we are cheating them.

The truth is, social promotion is a lousy idea. Standards only work if everybody can see that they mean something. If you have many, many failures, there will be tremendous political pressure to return to social promotion. To sustain the ability to hold students back, you must have a system of supports to keep failures low. But you must be willing to fail the few students who don't meet the standards, despite all you can do to help.

The best way to keep this from happening is to identify children who are not learning basic skills very early in their school career and offer them extra help before they fall behind and get used to failure. There are various ways of doing this. One-on-one tutoring with an expert teacher can turn children who were unable to sound out a word into confident readers. There are also full-scale programs that combine excellent in-class instruction with frequent diagnostic testing and daily tutoring sessions. Do interventions like these cost money? Of course, but even if you want to look at the issue in strictly economic terms, the dollar cost is far less than holding students back—or sending them out into the adult world without the basic skills they need.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

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